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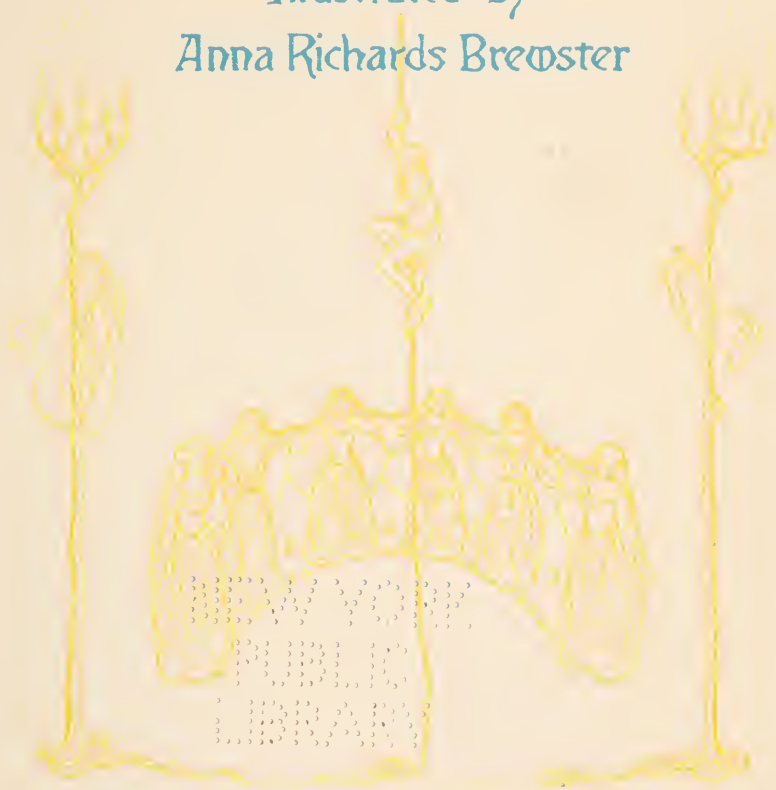




# THE RAINBOW STRING

BY ALGERNON <sup>L. V.</sup>TASSIN

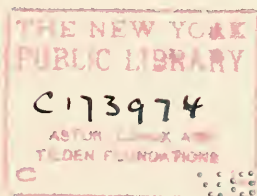
*Illustrated by*  
Anna Richards Brewster



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TO MARIAN BORN MIRIAM  
WHO IS  
THE WITCH, OAF, FAIRY GODMOTHER  
AND WHATEVER OF MY HOUSEHOLD

THE  
WITCH  
OAF  
FAIRY  
GODMOTHER  
AND  
WHATEVER  
OF  
MY  
HOUSEHOLD



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## THE RAINBOW STRING





## *The Tea Party of the Six Princesses* **THE RESCUING OAF**



ONCE upon a time there was a king who ruled over a country where there weren't men enough to go around. I tell you the tale as it was told me, though men in my country grow on every gooseberry bush. This king was put to it to marry off his daughter. So he sent to the kings of his acquaintance throughout the entire peninsula. But very little, I can tell you, came out of that. "Um-ah!" said each and all to the royal ambassador. "Try a bit more of this fried chicken, your Excellency."

For, if the truth were known, when they had any sons that weren't married they wanted to find a crown for them,

and this king's daughter had a brother. And a brother who had married a goat-girl of his own choosing and hadn't helped them out a bit with any of their daughters. "You may tell his Majesty what's the use? Stir and stew as you please and must, and up comes your son and upsets the pot."

Well, the king knew his own jackanapes had done the very same thing. To be sure, everybody was glad of it when they saw the girl he had brought home. But it was all very unsettling nevertheless. What in the world would become of royal houses if this sort of thing was to go on? And what were we coming to anyway, when a perfectly good princess could go a-begging?

Now it happened that in the palace there was a musical chair. If you sat on it, it would play a tune. And if you sat on it the right way, it would sing a tune. The only person who knew the right way to sit on it was the queen, and she always left the secret to the next queen and so on. So this queen thinks to herself what if the musical chair should have something to sing about it? She goes to her cupboard and takes down the key-ring, and into the secret tower she goes and up the five steps to the chair room. Locking the door behind her, she sits down the right way on the musical chair. At once the chair sang a tune: "Tinkle, tinkle, what is a King? A princess's tea party, that's the thing."

To be sure it was. The kings themselves had said their

sons picked as they pleased, so what was the use? But the Princesses! Who should know better than they how they had got married? So the queen thanked the chair for its tuneful advice and locking the door behind her, down the five steps she went and out of the tower and into her writing room. There she wrote four invitations on her best lavender paper, and stamped them with her tea-ring in lavender sealing wax. Anybody who knew anything about palaces would have seen at once by all this that it was a very particular tea party indeed.

She sent the invitations by special messengers, and they were to to back with the answers in less than a week and never mind how many horses they used up. One invitation was to the princess that married Boots, one was to the princess that married Tom the wood-chopper, one was to the Princess Angelica Jane, and one was to the princess that married the boy who used to be one-sided.

Then the queen straightened her crown, which always would wobble a bit when she did things, and took up another sheet of paper to write to the Princess Happy Eyes. But she thought she might as well step across the hall and ask her personally, seeing that the king had grown so ticklish about expenses lately and what we were coming to, goodness knows. Besides, the queen wanted Happy Eyes to advise her. Was it quite delicate to invite her own daughter to a tea party to discuss however in the world they

should marry her off? Her daughter—the princess who found her yesterday—might feel it somewhat embarrassing.

Well, Happy Eyes didn't see why not. After all, the princess ought to have a hand in selecting her own husband if there was any to be found. As for embarrassment, how could there be any when the dear queen was so gracious? That was the way with the girl. She put everybody at ease at once, just by smiling. So it was decided to ask the princess to come to hear her chances talked over, and the queen went out to converse with the cook.

Yes, the princesses would all be delighted and thank you very much. For two days before the party they were driving up in their coaches. That is, three of them were. But the morning of the tea party day had arrived and the flowers were picked and the cakes set out to cool, and no princess that married Tom the wood-chopper! It was painful to think something might have happened to her. As the hour grew near and never a sign of the princess or a sound of horsehoofs, you may believe there was excitement. The table was spread under the grape arbor, the princesses all sat around it with the footmen behind them. The queen was fidgeting whether she should keep the ladies waiting or not, and it was going to be awfully awkward.

When lo and behold, in walks the princess that married Tom the wood-chopper. On foot! Without so much as a

speck of dust on her yellow slippers or a rumple in her gold frock! She came walking into the garden as if she had just stepped from in front of the mirror in her own room, instead of being rivers and mountains from home. There was something mysterious about it. But of course all the ladies were too polite to ask what they were bursting to find out. As for the princess that married Tom the wood-chopper, she simply hung up her glass stick on the lattice of the grape arbor, kissed the queen's hand, curtsied to the rest, and sat down in the empty place as cool as you please. You would have thought there was nothing to make eyes at in a princess suddenly appearing spick and span from nowhere and no sign of how she got there.

Not until the last cake had been eaten and the finger bowls brought in did the queen broach the business of the day. Here was her darling child all ready to marry and no prince asking, and how if you please had all the dear princesses got their husbands? With that all the princesses turned to look at the queen's daughter, who blushed as pretty a pink as you might see. But Happy Eyes squeezed the hand of the poor thing under the tablecloth, and spoke up.

"I that am not a princess born," she said, "must wait for my betters to begin." With that all the princesses turned from the queen's daughter to look at Happy Eyes, and she smiled at them in the happiest way. So everybody

began talking at once, and the poor princess had time to put on another pair of cheeks.

The princess that married Boots told how she married him, and the princess that married Tom the wood-chopper told how she married him, the princess that married the boy who used to be one-sided told how she married him, and the Princess Angelica Jane told what happened to her, and there was a fine to-do over their stories. Now don't ask me to stop in the middle and tell you other peoples' stories. One thing at a time until time's up. A body can't do everything at once, and I'm telling you now how the princess that found her yesterday got married.

Well, when the princesses had finished their stories, the matter was as plain as plain. The princess that found her yesterday must get locked up somewhere and be rescued if she wanted a husband. Especially as kings' sons instead of marrying the princesses whom their fathers had picked out, did their own picking nowadays. If she got locked up in the right place, by the troll or giant or witch or whatever, the brave man that rescued her couldn't help but be all he should be. "Like my Boots! Or my Tom the wood-chopper! Or my lovely boy that used to be one-sided!" cried the princesses all together.

Well, the queen, as you may believe, had listened the crown over her ears. To be sure, she would have to plan out how the princess was to be captured and trump up what

giants or trolls or witches there were in the neighborhood. But it all sounded so much simpler than getting a husband in a kingdom where there weren't enough to go around, that she was delighted. Besides, she thought the musical chair might have some advice to sing her.

"My dears," she said as she rose in her stately way and straightened the crown, "shall we go to my secret tower? I have something there to show you." So she went to her cupboard and took out her key-ring, and they all trooped into the tower and up the five stairs and into the chair room. One by one the princesses sat in the chair and heard each a different tune. They were all enchanted. Never had they heard such charming music coming from nowhere before. Then the queen made them all stand at the window and look down into the garden and promise not to turn around until she clapped her hands. Then she sat down in the chair the right way, and the chair sang words to another tune. "Tinkle, tinkle, there dwells an oaf On the far edge of Sugarloaf."

The queen got up and clapped her hands, and the princesses all rushed about her. "So much for the Capturer!" cried the queen. The princesses all kissed the queen's daughter and danced up and down. But the princess looked a little bit sober. For she had never been through the experience, poor dear. Still if she had to be shut up in order to find a husband, she thought an oaf might do as

well as a giant or a troll or a witch, and it hadn't seemed to hurt the others a bit.

"Now," said the queen, "to find the Rescuer." She was anxious about this you may believe, since the king had scoured the peninsula for a likely man and the other kings had only said "Um-ah!" when his ambassador had begged them to help him out. Where I and the king and the ambassador have failed, thinks the anxious queen to herself, how should a musical chair succeed? But she made the princesses all look out of the window again, and once more she sat down in the right way. And the chair sang words to another tune. "Tinkle, tinkle, ask the mare To tell the boy with the carrot hair."

Though the queen sat a long time after the tune had stopped, not another word could she squeeze out of the chair. So she rose and straightened her skirts and clapped her hands, and the princesses all came rushing up to her again. Here was a pretty kettle of fish! What mare should they ask? There were mares enough in the kingdom, goodness knows, since everything was running to females anyway. As for the boy with carrot hair, it sounded pretty common. The poor princess was dismayed. Must she be locked up by an oaf, only to be rescued by a boy with carrot hair?

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the princesses all at once. "Any hair is better than no hair at all. Besides, you never could

tell by hair and things whether he's common or not. My husband was just a Boots. And mine was a wood-chopper. And mine never had anything to eat in his life before but fish. And you wouldn't want to see more high-stepping men!" cried they all together. But Happy Eyes, who had married a prince, had something even more convincing to say. "Why, my darling sister," she said shyly, "what was I but a goat-girl?"

Well, the princess was somewhat cheered by all this. Perhaps, after all, it might be rather nice to be rescued by a boy with carrotty hair, if one could only find the mare that was to tell him about it. This shoe, you may believe, was pinching the queen too. There must be a million mares at the very least! However would they know when they'd found the right one?

"As easy as a fiddle," said the princess that married the wood-chopper. "But before we set out, see if there are any other errands." So they all looked out of the window again, and once more the queen sat on the chair. And the chair sang: "Tinkle, tinkle, tie the thread Under the hair and over the head."

The thread? What thread? And whose hair? And whose head? Was there ever anything more provoking? But though the queen sat on the chair in the right way until her feet went to sleep, never a word more would the chair sing. So she undid her feet and straightened her skirts, and then

she clapped her hands, although she felt more like wringing them. The princesses all rushed to her and began talking at once. Was it the mare's head? Or the carrotty boy's? Or what? Perhaps it was a reminding thread. To tie around the mare's head to remind her to tell the boy? Or to remind the boy to rescue the princess? The princess thought she wouldn't like to be rescued by a boy that had to be reminded of her by a thread. Well, perhaps it wasn't a reminding thread at all. But in any case whose head and whose hair was it? Could it be the oaf's?

"Why," spoke up the princess, "I feel as if it were my head. I feel as if—" and she threw back her hair. Strange, she had been quite sure she felt something there! What on earth could it have been?

Now it was the turn of Happy Eyes to clap her hands. "It was your godmother of course. It's your head she means. Now we must find the thread. If you hadn't broken your wish-box, you could wish to find it at once."

"The way to find what you want," put in the princess that married the wood-chopper, "is to shut your eyes and go back to the beginning."

The princess shut her eyes and went back to the beginning, but she could spy nothing.

"No, no, not that way," cried the princess that married the wood-chopper. "You mustn't squinch them. Just close them cozy, so that the light can come through."

No sooner had the princess gone back to the beginning with her eyes closed cozy so that the light could come through, than she clapped her hands. "Oh! I see a thread. It is woven out of five strands. Yellow, brown, black, chestnut, and, and—If it was hair, I should say it was copper-gold."

Now it was the Princess Angelica Jane's turn to clap her hands.

"Why, it's a thread woven of *our* hair."

When they put their heads together, you may believe they very soon found out that's what it was. Each of them plucked the very longest hair they could find and the queen plaited them altogether into a single strand. Then she tied it around her daughter, under the hair and over the head. When it was on nobody would have guessed it was there, not even a witch with gimlets for eyes.

Now it was the turn of the princess that married the woodchopper to clap her hands. "All take hands and hold tight," she cried. "And we will all go find the mare."

The queen straightened her crown thoughtfully. Her feet weren't half awake yet. Besides, although she would do almost anything to marry off her daughter, this going from mare to mare to find out if it was the right one, hardly seemed a queenly thing to do. "Excuse me," she said. "It sounds like a long walk, and these are my tea party shoes."

But the princess that married the wood-chopper laughed mysteriously. "Only take hold of your daughter's hand," she cried.

Not one foot had they moved, but the next moment there they all stood somewhere else! Instead of a chair room it was an open field nibbled as smooth as green velvet, and nobody knew but one how they got there. Right in front of them was nibbling a white mare. Between nibbles she sighed and snuffed and looked at the seven ladies with her liquid black eyes for all the world as if she were asking them to ask her something. Of course, she was the one they were to ask to tell the boy with the carrotty hair.

Now it was the turn of all of them together to clap their hands. They all cried out at once. "Please, good mare, tell the boy with the carrotty hair that the princess who found her yesterday is locked up by the oaf on the far edge of Sugarloaf and he must rescue her."

But if they expected the mare to nod her white head and show them her heels as she galloped away with her message, they were quite mistaken. Long she looked at them with her questioning liquid eyes, and then with a sigh and a snuff began nibbling again.

"Oh, oh!" said the seven ladies in dismay. Then the six of them cried to the princess that married the wood-chopper: "Are you sure it's the *right* mare?"

"Sure as the moon," said she. "What brought us here

never yet made a mistake. That must be the way mares behave when they're told things. But I must say she doesn't seem in a hurry."

"To be sure not," said the princess with a sudden idea. "Why should she be? I'm not locked up yet."

Of course. Naturally, the mare wasn't going to tell the carroty boy a fib. They must find the oaf and have him capture the princess. But where was the oaf? All around was a ring of mountains, the green, then the blue, then the faraway violet ones. But which of them was Sugarloaf? The queen had just straightened her crown after one journey, and here was another. To go from mountain to mountain asking which one was Sugarloaf hardly seemed becoming to a queen. "Really, my dears,—” she began.

But the princess that married the wood-chopper caught hold of one hand without so much as by your leave, and the others caught hold of the other. All in a moment and not a foot stirring, the seven ladies were out of the field and on the high stone shelf of a mountain! Overhead there was nothing but rock and underneath there was nothing but precipice; and nobody but one ever knew how they got there. The queen gasped and straightened her crown. After an uphill trip like that it must be all every which way. Suppose it fell off and went ringing down the precipice, what would the king say?

But the princess, as you may imagine, at once began

looking around for the oaf who should capture her. If this were Sugarloaf and this shelf the far edge, he must be coming along in a minute. Goodness knows there was hardly room for an oaf to turn round on it. But he might be off on a visit! She didn't know which she feared the most—that he wasn't or that he was. If she had to be captured in order to be married, the sooner it was all over the better. But what if he did his own cooking, and there was nothing to eat but oafings? Come to think of it, the princesses hadn't said a word about any food at all while they were locked up. What if you had to starve until you were rescued? She felt she must find out right off.

But all the ladies were looking high and low for some sign of the oaf. They peered right over the precipice trying to peer under the floor of the shelf, or right up the wall of the rock trying to see over the top of it. They craned their







necks this way and that, the queen all the while holding tight to her crown. So they kept skipping from one end of the shelf to the other. The princesses had only a moment to spare for the poor girl. "Oh yes, they always feed you," they cried as they skipped. "But of course you are so worried you can't touch a morsel." And on they went back and forth skipping from one end of the shelf to the other, peering over the precipice or up the wall of rock for the oaf who was to capture the princess. It was ridiculous that six princesses and a queen with a crown on should have to wait this way for an oaf to happen along.

But Happy Eyes stopped as she skipped and kissed her. "Don't be afraid, dear sister-in-law," she said. "I'm sure the oaf can't harm you while you've got your thread on. That's why your godmother had you wear it. And each one of us is in it, and we've all been shut up or something, and no harm came to us." Then she skipped on, and joined the



other ladies peering from one end to the other, up wall, over precipice, looking for the oaf who was to capture the princess. Suddenly the little princess who was all ready to be captured with a mare all ready to tell a carrotty boy to rescue her, grew quite vexed. It was ridiculous to talk about an oaf not harming her who hadn't even happened along! Better harm her than not happen at all! And at the thought of that leisurely white mare sighing and snuffing as she went on nibbling the nibbled velvety grass, and the carrotty boy not even knowing yet she was alive, to say nothing of being rescued, the princess burst into tears of vexation and up goes her hand to the woven thread under her hair.

All at once all the ladies rushed back to her. Wriggling and slapping, down the wall of rock over their heads had come dangling a huge rope. It must be the oaf! They all caught hold of hands and waited breathlessly, the princess at the end of the row. "We will wait," cried the princess that married the wood-chopper, "until we're sure you're captured."

If it took a rope as big as that for him to come down on, how big would he be when he got there? The princess felt rather proud on the whole, in spite of the delicious creeps coming up from her toes. After all, it would be no ordinary oaf that would capture her, and the bigger oaf the braver the carrotty boy. Then the rope began to wriggle and slap harder and harder. The oaf was coming down!

Suddenly far up in the sky she saw two black things descending. Nearer they came, and she saw they must be a pair of soles. Her heart began to hop. Nearer they came and she saw the soles had boots to them. Her heart began to skip. Nearer they came, and she saw the boots had legs to them. Her heart began to jump. She let go of the hand of the princess next to her, and up went her hands to her thread.

"March!" cried the princess that married the wood-chopper. How they had gone and where she never knew, but there was the princess alone on the far edge of Sugarloaf and those terrible boots thrashing in the air right above her head! The legs already had a back to them, and the back had two arms, and the two arms a tousled head. Out rushed the princess with a cry to the very edge of the far edge and crouched down above the precipice, her hand upon her thread. But wild with fear as she was, she knew she was captured at last. And she prayed with all her heart



that now that it wasn't a fib the white mare would stop her everlasting nibbling and sighing and snuffing, and gallop off to tell the carrotty boy at once! at once!

When she opened her eyes again, there in front of her stood the oaf. And he had carrotty hair! The princess rose to her feet. Small as she was by the side of the oaf, all of a sudden she hadn't a speck of fear. All of her fear had curdled, just like that, into vexation. How dare the oaf have carrotty hair too!



"And who, pray, may you be?" said the oaf.

"I am a princess," she said, as snippy as you please.

The oaf twisted and turned this way and that. "One from six leaves five. There should be five more of you," he said stupidly.

The princess stamped her foot. How could she be sure with so stupid an oaf whether she was captured or not, and if she wasn't really captured, she couldn't really be rescued, could she? That white mare had such a conscience, she mightn't have started even yet to tell the boy to rescue her! "Is this where you live when you're at home?" she commanded. "Tell me at once!"

"Yes," said the oaf. "And it's a fine view I have."

Was there ever anything so stupid? The princess stamped her foot again. "Where are you going to lock me up?" she demanded.

"I've nothing to lock you up in," said the oaf. "But you should be five more."

The princess thought she should scream with vexation. It would be just like that mare to make a point of her being locked up, and she might go on with her everlasting nibbling and sighing and snuffing until she knew the key was turned. She stamped her foot again. "Well," she said sharply. "You might at least tie my hands or something."

"I've nothing to tie them with," said the oaf. "Why aren't there five more of you?"

"There's the rope," said the princess severely.

The oaf rubbed his eyes stupidly. "The rope? But the rope is tied to the top of the mountain. And if I go up to untie it, how shall I come down again? And why should I bother, as long as there aren't five more of you?"

You may believe the princess thought she was quite worth bothering about, only one as she was. She wasn't going to come all this way without making sure she was captured. The stupidity of such an oaf was beyond belief. What did he mean by his everlasting five more of them? "Here," she said crossly, and she untied the thread under her hair. "Take this, stupid, and tie my hands together tight and capture me."

She reached up the thread to the oaf, and he took it and rubbed his eyes again. "What's this?" he yammered.

The princess was ready to burst with vexation. In her

mind's ear, she could hear the white mare going on with that everlasting nibbling and sighing and snuffing. She was sure that as long as there was the slightest chance of its being a fib the creature didn't mean to say one word to the boy who was to rescue her. If she could have reached up so far, she would gladly have reached the oaf a box on the ear. To think that everything might be spoiled through his stupidity! There he was, actually stroking the thread up and down with his long fingers instead of tying her hands.

She stamped her foot. "Do you hear me, oaf! Tie my hands and capture me."

But the oaf only kept on stroking. "Pretty, pretty, pretty. One, two, three, four, five. But there should be six." He looked helplessly from the thread to her and back again to stroking.

Would the moon calf never have done with his everlasting prattle about fives and sixes? The princess' temper flew away entirely. "Stoop down, oaf!" she cried. The oaf stooped down and when she could reach his ear, she gave it a sounding box. "There *are* six!" she screamed. "Five princesses in that thread, and I am the sixth boxing your stupid ear. Tie my hands and cap—"

But she never finished. Suddenly the oaf swooped her up under his arm and he rushed to the rope. He stuck the princess in his belt and up he went hand over hand. Never was she so jounced about in all her life before. This way

and that thrashed his huge arms, like a windmill with the princess gasping on the beam. Before she had a chance to think how scared she was and to pray with all her heart that the belt wouldn't break, there they were at the top. But without a moment to catch her breath, he pulled up the rope and let it down on the other side. Down he scrambled, hand over hand. Slash, crash went his two huge arms about her ears like a windmill. Before she had time to think how scared she was and pray with all her heart the belt wouldn't break, there they were down on the near side of Sugarloaf. But so far from breaking, the belt was getting tighter and tighter, and just as the princess feared it would certainly squeeze the life out of her, he unbuttoned the belt and threw it away. Then he slung her under his arm and they ran on and ran on, up and down, scrambling and sliding. Never was the princess so jounced about in all her life before. Just as she felt she must surely jounce out of his arm, or that it was growing too small to hold her or whatever, he stuck her on her feet and reached down his hand and they ran on and ran on, up and down, scrambling and sliding. Just as she felt she could run no farther and she surely must drop if she ran another step, they stopped running. And there she was, holding the hand not of a great stupid oaf at all, but a fine youngster only a head taller than she. And the head had carrotty hair!

You may believe, too, there was nothing whatever stupid about him. For the first thing he did was kiss her.

The second thing he did was tell her a story. "Who I am I know no more than you," he said. "And what I've been at I can't tell, so don't ask me. I can tell you only what somebody told me once. Who it was I don't know, so don't ask me. This is what somebody told me once.

"Six princesses and a rainbow string  
Will come to capture a capturing oaf  
On the faraway edge of Sugarloaf,  
And a mare will fetch the wedding ring. "

Then he kissed the princess again. As for her, she never heard a finer story in her life. And to think she had ever called him stupid and boxed his ear!

"Hullo, here's the mare," he said between kisses. For all the world, thought the happy princess, as if it were an interruption. Sure enough, there the white mare was. She just galloped up to them, and looked at them with her liquid eyes and with a sigh and a snuff fell to nibbling again. But every now and then she would raise her liquid eyes between nibbles, and look at them between kisses as if she were asking them to ask her something.

"I think," said the princess, "she wants us to ask her to take us a ride."

"Oh, bother!" said the boy with the carrotty hair. "Aren't we having a good enough time where we are?"

"Perhaps she wants to ride us to the wedding ring,"

said the princess. "And I guess we'd better go get it."

So on the mare's back jumped the boy and into his arms got the princess. The mare galloped and galloped until she came to the king's garden, and into the gate and up to the grape arbor. There sat the queen and the five princesses all having another tea. You may believe there was a great to-do. The princess rushed into her mother's arms, the princesses all flocked around, the carroty boy twiddled his thumbs, and the mare began to nibble the flowers with the softest of sighs and snuffs.

"Where's the wedding ring?" cried the princess.

Happy Eyes laughed. "I told you it was your godmother. When we got back to the tea party, here was the ring lying right in your saucer."

"Gracious!" said the princess that married the wood-chopper. "I must be meeting my Tom back at the palace in just one minute. It's high time I started. Thank you for a lovely tea party." She kissed the queen goodbye, and one by one the princesses. Then she took down her glass stick from the lattice of the grape arbor. "I hope you'll ask us all to the wedding," she said.

And there she wasn't! Just like that! Now don't ask me how she went. A body can't tell but one story at a time. Perhaps you'll hear it one of these fine days when I tell you *her* story."

But the last thing that happened in this story was the mare. She came up and snuggled her muzzle into the hands of the carrotty boy as he stood there twiddling his thumbs, feeling quite out of it with so many strange princesses and a queen, even if her crown was on crooked.

"Oh yes," said the carrotty boy, as if he had suddenly begun remembering things. "By the way, when is the wedding?"

Well, how could the wedding possibly be before this day month? All the princesses, who couldn't cross rivers and mountains like the princess that married the wood-chopper, had to get home and change their frocks and buy their presents and everything.

"A month?" said the carrotty boy. "That's thirty years away. But it gives me just time to make my fortune in. Goodbye, my dear. I'm off to the tailor's."

He leapt upon the back of the white mare and away they went galloping through the garden gate. The princess sat down at the tea table and told them how she captured the capturer and instead of being rescued was the rescuer herself. Dear, dear, thought the queen as she straightened her crown again. Matters have come to a pretty pass when girls must do all the rescuing. But what could you expect in a kingdom where there weren't men enough to go around?



## *The Story of the Princess that married the Wood-chopper.* THE MOON BOWL



ONCE upon a time all the rivers ran down into holes in the ground, and there was no big pond for people to save their drinking-water in. It was only the bowl in the moon spilling over at night that used to start the rivers going again when they ran down. When the bowl would tip slightly, the people below watched it anxiously, you may believe.

“There!” they would say to each other. “She’s tipping at last, and we shall have rain some of these fine nights if only she doesn’t change her mind again. And high time too. The rivers are getting skimpy and you can see the shiny stones at the bottom. Soon we shall have little to drink,

to say nothing of wash-day. If only she doesn't change her mind again!"

Of course, as you may see from all this, they didn't know much about the moon. But all the same they called her "she" just as we do nowadays, along with the other fine things that are beautiful and bring you what you want—like ships, for instance. But chiefly they called her "she" because they saw she was always changing her mind. Especially if she thought anything was expected of her, and people were growing anxious. So when the rivers really were getting skimpy, people always whispered when they talked of the moon, and pretended they had more water than they knew what to do with. Particularly if there was a wind, for you never know what the wind will whisk up at any moment.

"It's best not to let her know what you want, that moon of ours," they used to say. "Like any other woman, she's both changeable and contrary."

Well, as a matter of fact, we know nowadays that the woman in the moon is the man in the moon-bowl, and just how the whole thing works. But to show you how right people have always been even when their guesses were nearest wrong, they were climbing up the proper tree when they said she was changeable and contrary. For that's just what she was, only it was a he instead of a she.

They thought the reason they didn't get rain was because

a woman couldn't make up her mind when it was really because a man felt the kind of work he couldn't do was more important than the kind of work he could do. You see, it was a man instead of a woman who lived next-door to the moon-bowl, and he was supposed to tip it up every little while and spill out the rain water. That was really his business, and as he made a very good living by it with not much to do, of course he used to grumble and think it was a shame that a man of his talents should have to work at all. It was so much better to plan out more important things he intended to do some day when he got around to it! So sometimes when he had the bowl almost tipped up, he'd discover that she'd do for a few more days yet; and he'd tip her back again and go away peevishly, grumbling at wasting his time. It never seemed to occur to him that he might as well finish the job while he was about it, and then there'd have been longer between-whiles for his star-matching.

You would never believe it, but that was the work he thought he was cut out for. He thought it would be fine to trim all their edges and put all the big stars in one row and the next biggest in another and so on, with the Milky Way making a nice tidy ring around them all instead of cutting through the middle any which way like a crack in a mirror. So that's another thing that shows you how foolish he was. Everybody knows, nowadays, that stars weren't made to be matched, and they wouldn't look pretty if they were. They

were made to be chinky and careless, and somebody told me that's just what makes them wink so in cold weather. So you see it's a blessed mercy this man had to work, or he might have found out a way to spoil it all.

But, anyway, when he'd tip up the moon-bowl and discover she'd do for a week yet—which he might have found out in the first place if he hadn't hurt his eyesight by his peevishness—and then tip it back again, the people on the earth were awfully disappointed. "My, my!" said they, (sometimes so annoyed that they forgot to whisper) "the rivers are getting low, and wash-day's coming round, and there's the moon changing her mind *again*. It's too bad that a whole set of people should be dependent on the whims of a woman!" Which of course is true, only it was a man instead of a woman, and there's very little difference in that, goodness knows. They bothered and held meetings about it, yet it never seemed to occur to any one of them to go up and see if things could be remedied. But at last there comes along a chap made of another kind of dough. And that's why we know all about it now.

In the first place, nobody knew where he came from, and that of course was a great point in his favor. In the second, he knew just what he wanted, which was another. He wanted to marry the princess and though she was far too young to be thinking of such things, she wanted to marry him. He looked at her just once, and she came to him as

natural as anything. For she'd seen him chopping wood, which as everybody knows is a fine test of a man. When he can manage it well, it's one of the most taking sights in the world. He's all strong sweeps and curves, exactly like a river when you look at it from a mountain side.

And that brings me back to the rivers again. Just at the time when he first saw the little princess, as slim and white as any sapling he was cutting down and with just the same green budsiness all over her—just then was one of the times when people began to get anxious, and the moon-bowl had tipped half way twice and spilled out no water at all, and the rivers were getting so low they had begun to purr. For you must know that in those days rivers were just the opposite of cats and purred whenever they were empty. So when our fine young wood-chopper walked into the palace, without so much as scraping the loam off his boots on the scraper at the door, and said he wanted to marry the princess and must have her and that was all there was about it, this is what happened.

The king turned to his blushing daughter and said, "My child?"

And she said, with a happy look about the eyes, "Yes, Father King." (Those were days when kings stood on ceremony even with their daughters.) "I want to marry him too. He is everything I have dreamed of. I have seen him but once, chopping wood in the forest. But a man who can

chop wood like that is a prince.” (You see how young the princess was, since she still thought it necessary to argue about a thing she had made up her mind to!) “The swing of his arms as he swings the axe is like the wind itself, and the sweep of his body is like a full river.”

“Aha, a river!” said the king, pouncing gloomily on the word. All unwittingly she had started the wrong thought going in his mind. That’s what happens when you argue—you so often start wrong thoughts in people’s minds and run the risk of losing just what you’re arguing for! “Here are all these people,” went on the king moodily, “coming to me for water and bleating like so many silly sheep. As if I could keep the moon from changing her mind! I never kept even your mother. Come here, my child. Bless me, how pretty you’re growing!”

That was the love-light in her eyes, though neither she nor the wood-chopper knew it. But the king did. He had seen her mother’s eyes before and after, and he knew what made the difference. He pinched her ear, and he couldn’t help owning to himself what a fine choice she had made. Nevertheless, kings can’t go around marrying their daughters to any wood-chopper that comes along. They’ve got to be sure that the man can keep the boots on his feet and the crown on his head. And as he stood there pinching his daughter’s ear fondly, the thought that she had started up in his mind by her foolish argument went on wriggling until it wriggled out.

"See here, my fine fellow! All these people are grumbling about the moon not attending to her business. Suppose you just go up there and see what's the matter. If you can straighten out things, you shall have my daughter. And if you can't you shan't."

"To be sure!" cried the wood-chopper with a jump. "If there's anything to be set right, I'll fix it. But if there isn't I'll have her just the same."

The king said he'd see about that later, but he really said it because he couldn't think of anything else that was dignified to say. For he wasn't worrying at all about whether the young man was strong enough to keep the crown on his head, and he'd made up his mind to let him have the princess anyhow. Though of course, being a king, he had to pretend it would take him a long while to make up his mind.

So the wood-chopper kissed the king's daughter goodbye and off he started, making no more bones of scraping the loam off his boots for a trip to the moon than to the palace. But he hadn't the slightest idea how to get there. So he thought he'd go back to the beginning and see if he could find out. First, then, he went off to the forest where it was still, to the very place where he had been working when his princess had come to him, and he sat down to think how he should get up to the moon. And this was just the right first thing to do. Always go back to the place things started, if you're wondering how to finish them right. Well,

thinks this wood-chopper, how on earth shall I get to the moon?

Absurd as it seems nowadays, they didn't know then the way to get up. Just as if you couldn't see the way plainly the moment you shut your eyes! But the only way they had of finding out about things then was to stare straight into them until their eyes ached, and so people who were trying to find out about things were always going around scowling. Well, well, how funny that all seems now! But then I dare



say some time they'll think *we're* funny too, so what's the use of blaming anybody who hasn't found out yet the right way to do things?

Well, this wood-chopper wasn't wise enough to shut his eyes, but after he'd puzzled a bit about the way to get up, he thought he'd like to cool off his head a bit. He thought he'd like to feel the cool air whirr about his head as he swung his axe. So he picked up his axe and took a chop. And then he took another. And then he took a third. Now, don't ask me why things always come in threes. They do, and that's all there is to it. That's one of the things *your* little boy will think we're

funny not to know. But the proof that everybody thinks so is as plain as the buttons on your jacket. Ever so long ago somebody said so in a song—which is the way wise people boil down what they know—and I've heard you say the song was stupid, which shows all *you* know. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." That's three tries, isn't it? Do it yourself sometime, and if it doesn't work you'll have to begin all over again. But you can always be sure that it won't be the fifth or the eighth or the eleventh try you'll succeed. It's always in threes. And there's a story about that I'll tell you some other time, for if I don't get on with this it will be bedtime.

Well, just as he raised the axe again it occurred to this fine young wood-chopper that he'd feel the air whirr better if he swung the axe and shut his eyes at the same moment. Swish whirred the air! Down came the axe! It made such a splendid gash in the tree that off bounded a chip merrily. And it whirred and whizzed for all the world as if it thought it was a little wind all by itself. The wood-chopper saw it spinning in the air with his eyes shut. If he had opened them he never would have seen what happened. But he was a quick-witted sprig, as you may suppose, and since he had seen so much in a manner quite unusual to him, he made up his mind to keep them closed and see what he would see.

The chip flew merrily through the air and he followed it. In not more than a minute—for when your eyes are closed

it doesn't take you long to go far—he was at the shore of that far-away other pond which people don't drink because somebody spilt salt in it. And there he saw the way to the moon as plainly as could be. And up he went, forgetting all about the chip that had shown it to him. But the chip didn't care, for it was off on a fine voyage of its own. Like all other chips, the moment it struck the water it became a boat, and there were any number of splendid places to sail to.

Well, the wood-chopper—Bless me, I haven't told you what his name was! It was Tom, of course. Well, Tom the wood-chopper went right on up; and when he got to the top, he stepped off the path and on to the grass and walked along until what should he spy but an old man stooping over something. He was nothing but rickety bones which rattled every time he coughed—and that was all the time—and he was stooping over something.

“What are you stooping over, sir?” asked Tom politely.

The rickety man peered sidewise. “Ugh! ugh! I am drawing a diagram,” said he between coughs. “A diagram of a new plan to match the stars. A brand-new plan which has just picked me up.” Of course he meant which *he* had just picked up. But as he knew he was doing something which kept him from the work he ought to have been doing, he pretended that he couldn't help it and was at the mercy of any plan that happened to come along.

"But even up here, where nothing seems dry at all," said Tom, still politely, "you are stirring up quite a deal of dust with your stick. That's what makes you cough, I guess."

"Yes," said the rickety man anxiously. "And I fear that my bones will not stand it. They are not what they were. But what is a cough to the great work I am doing!"

"Work?" said Tom, who could see nothing for all his squinting. "And what is your great work?"

"Why, matching the stars. When I have found out the best way."

"And when you have found it, how are you going to get them near enough together to match?"

The old man looked at him scornfully. "*That* I shall come to at the proper time."

"But," insisted Tom, "how shall you get *at* it when you get *to* it?"

The rickety man coughed violently and with annoyance. "One must take the first step first. That's the only way things are done."

"And what will be the good of it when you find the way?"

"If it moves things about like that, simpleton?" cried the rickety man. "Why, how can it help being good? Whatever moves things about as much as that must be important."

Tom, as you may suppose, was tired of such rubbish by this time. "Do you know where the moon-bowl is to be

found?" he asked. "One sees it quite plainly down there, but here you stir up all this dust."

"Do not interrupt me with your questions," scolded the rickety man. "It's bad enough to have to stop in the middle of an idea, just to see if the stupid thing's full. A mind like mine oughtn't to be bothered with silly chores like that." He paused suddenly. What did this meddlesome youngster want with the moon-bowl. It wouldn't do to say too much to him. "Um—ah! What do you mean?" he coughed cunningly.

"Our rivers down there are purring for emptiness, and we must have rain. I want to see why the moon changes her mind so often. Just as she tips the bowl and we think the rain's coming, she keeps tipping it back again. It's very provoking. If it's anything I can fix I'll fix it. Short of marrying her of course. I'm promised to another."

Before he spoke again, the old man coughed forty coughs, some of which sounded like chuckles; and all the while his bones rattled frightfully. He didn't need to cough as many as forty, but he wanted to gain time to think. If the people down there imagined it was the moon's fault that it didn't rain, it was none of his affair to tell them differently. And if they found out it was *his* fault, they might send up some more people like this pert jackanapes to pester him with their questions and keep him from getting at his ideas. Or even find a way to make him mind his stupid job, which any

fool could handle, and so deprive the world of a brand-new arrangement of the stars. Decidedly, it was a good notion to keep on coughing.

At last Tom grew impatient and asked again, less politely.

But the old man, having now coughed as many coughs as he could pretend, began to lay about him with his stick. He wanted to stir up so much dust that he could begin coughing all over again in earnest. "Excuse me!" he jerked out at last. "When I have a spell like this it affects my ears. If you should shout yourself green, I couldn't hear a word."

At this Tom grew enraged. That's the way with these polite strong people. They are like rubber bands— all of a sudden you stretch them too far, and crack, they fly back at you!

"As for ears," he cried, "there's more than one way to affect them!" He seized the rickety man by the ears and pulled him forward with such briskness that the glass matching-stick fell ringing to the ground.

The old man, forgetting all about his ears, grabbed at the stick wildly. But in vain. It was just beyond his reach. "Oh!" he shrieked. "See how rough you are. My stick, my stick! If it had been broken by so much as a splinter, I could not get around. Nor tip the moon-bowl either. I should have lost my job, beneath me as it is."

"Tip the moon-bowl? What do you mean, old man?" Tom tweaked his ears again in excitement.

"Oh, oh!" squealed the rickety man. "Stop and I'll tell. I tip the bowl when she's full. With my glass stick."

"Oho!" said Tom. "Then it's you we must thank for our thirst. Show me where the bowl is."

"But I cannot go without my stick," whined the old man. "It is a walking-stick. I hold it in my hand and it walks me there. Let me pick it up and I will show you."

"And walk yourself off no doubt, my fine bag of bones." Tom reached out suddenly and seized the stick. "It will walk both of us there. Me on my legs and you on my back. All aboard. Step lively."

It was all breath for the old man to protest, so up he got, scrambling and wheezing. Then Tom brandished the stick like a cane. "Off we go!" he cried gaily. He had scarce got the words out than there they were. The stick walked them there in a wink.

Tom caught his breath, for he was not used to changing his spots so rapidly. Then he gulped. But this time it was because something had stuck in his throat. Right above their heads was the great silver bowl of the moon, poised between its two poles, and gleaming softly as if it had just been scrubbed. That's a sight I can tell you. You can see it yourself when the rest of the moon is dark. If you think it's fine down here, what must it be when you're right up under it?

The bowl seemed level with water to the brim, for shining

drops were trickling down its sides. Tom gazed and gazed until the gulp went out of his throat. Then he said in a whisper (though he hadn't meant to whisper when he opened his mouth to speak): "See, we might have had rain these two nights if you'd minded your business. You and your silly star-matching! But how can you reach up to the bowl with this little glass stick? Even I am not so tall."

"It needs not the tallness of any oaf like you!" grunted the old man scornfully. "The stick will reach anything you want it to reach."

"Oho!" said Tom. "Then how can a rickety wisp like you move so large a bowl when you've reached it? Quick, tell me, or I'll tweak your ears again."

The old man saw it was no use. "It needs not the girth of a great oaf like you. Touch it ever so gently with the stick, and it tips when you will and back when you will."

So Tom stood aside while the rickety man ducked to get out of the way and touched the bowl gently with the glass stick. It tipped slowly, slowly, one side down and the other side up, until the water began to run out merrily. And as it ran over the silver sides it made a noise—a whispering, purling, singing noise like a thousand musical glasses. It made Tom think all at once of all the purring rivers and the wet rustling leaves and the voice of someone singing a little Tom to sleep. And he thought of all the people on the earth clapping their hands in joy to see the rain dance down.

"Why have you kept our rain from us?" he said gently to the rickety man on his shoulders. For no one can hear the rain come sliding out of the moon-bowl and not feel gentle, even to bad men.

The rickety man twisted and squirmed. "I—I—I—" he stammered. "There is my great work to do. I can't be minding her all the time. I was cut out for greater things than tipping moon-bowls."

"But why do you tip her a little and make us think the rain is coming, and then tip her back again?" asked Tom more sternly. "What is there in that?"

Again the rickety man squirmed on Tom's shoulders, and he knotted and unknotted his legs around Tom's neck, trying to think what to say. For he knew how angry the truth would make Tom, and for the bones of him he could hatch up no suitable fib. But Tom gave an impatient shrug, and he had to go on.

"I—I—I," the rickety man stammered. He paused so long that Tom began to jounce him, until he fairly jounced the words out of him one by one, bounding up and down on Tom's shoulders as if he were riding a galloping horse. "Oh—oh!" he shrieked as he galloped. "To make—*it rain*—as little—as *I can*. To get back—to *my work*. Let me down—you *great oaf!*

"Oaf?" said Tom. "Oof!" With that he unknotted the rickety man's legs from his neck in a twinkling and jounced

him high in the air and splash into the moon-bowl. And it tipped very low and the water all spilled out in a rush. And the music of the spilling water was like a whole army of musical glasses. Tom was quite blinded by their singing. When the sound cleared away, he saw that the bowl had tipped itself straight up again and the rickety man was peering over the edge.

"Take me down, take me down!" he shrieked when he had coughed and spluttered the water out of his lungs. "Or toss me up my glass stick!"

"Suppose it should splinter," laughed Tom. "Now that you're there, you will always mind your business. If you don't tip the bowl when it's full, the water will come up to your nose. It's a good job I've done today, and I must get back to my princess."

And snarl as he would, the rickety man could get no more out of him. "My stick, my stick!" he shrieked.

But Tom grasped the stick like a cane. "To the palace!" he cried. And in three winks, one for the sky and one for the air and one for the earth, he was there, And nobody ever knew when he got in. The king just looked up from the pie he was eating and saw him standing at the table.

"Father King," began Tom, "has it rained here lately?"

"Rain?" said the king. "All that old sandy place is a deep lake. We shall always have water now. We can afford to have more wash-days. Was it you fixed that?"

“Yes,” said Tom. I’ll tell you all about it some other day, for I’ve got to get married right off.”

The princess came in just then with another cup of coffee. Of course she dropped it at once and flew to Tom. And it was all settled in a jiffy.

And that’s how there’s a man in the moon-bowl. He can’t get out, for since he’s nothing but bones he doesn’t dare jump. His cough gets worse all the time with rheumatism. Some times he grows so sulky that the water almost comes up to his nose before he’ll lean over and tip the bowl and let the rain out. It all serves him right for not minding his business. And thank heaven, there’s no longer any danger of his meddling with our stars, for Tom took precious good care he never saw his glass stick again.



*The Story of the Princess that married Boots.*  
**WHY THE SKY IS BLUE**



ONCE upon a time on the borders of a dark wood there lived a man and his wife. How they lived I can't tell, but I'm sure it was from hand to mouth. This couple were blessed with three children, and never so much as a girl among them. At last they gave up hoping for one, and sent their sons off, charging each to bring back a wife with him. Who the wives of the first two were nobody has ever told me. Of course they got them—for wives are plenty enough goodness knows!—but I'm sure there was nothing pretty about them. But Boots, that was the third son's name of course, had different stuff in him. Nothing would suit him but the prettiest princess in the land. So he set out to find her.

He went six days and six nights until he came to the Dovrefell. There he saw a big bird sitting on an oak tree. "Catch me," said the bird, "for I can sit all day and coin money."

So Boots caught her, and she perched on his shoulder, and away they went merrily for six days and six nights more. Then they came to a rock and there on top of it sat a cat. "Catch me," said the cat, "for I can sit all day and make blankets."

So Boots caught her, and she sat on his other shoulder, and away they went merrily for six days and six nights more. Then they came to a church door and against it stood a quern. "Take me," called the quern, "for I grind whatever I'm bid."

So Boots took the quern and slung it over his back and on they went merrily for six days and six nights more. Soon it got so dark they couldn't see their way and they heard a great rumbling over the hill. Sniffing and sniffing, down came a huge troll.

"I smell Christian blood," he roared.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried out Boots. "What if you do!

"Quick!" called the cat in his ear. "Hide behind the rock."

By this time the troll was so angry that he tore up the trees for two acres around. But Boots was safe in his hiding place.

"There!" said the cat to Boots. "You may thank your stars you weren't in that tussle."

"But soft!" said the bird. "Let us find out what he can do for us." And she flew out upon the bush.

"Oh, that was you, was it?" said the troll.

"Yes," answered the bird. "I was flying by with a Christian bone in my beak, and that's what you smelt. Shall I tell you a story?"

Yes, the troll would like to hear a story, but she must hurry up about it, for he had to be back at his castle before midnight to see his princess.

"Oho!" said the bird softly. "We shall see what we shall see." Then she sang of a beautiful princess who had a carding-comb and lived on cherries.

"A pack of rubbish!" said the troll. "You should see my princess if you want to see the prettiest princess in the world."

"Oho!" said the bird softly. "We shall see what we shall see." And aloud, she sang of a castle whose walls were as high as a mountain and glistened like glass.

"What a bore!" grunted the troll. "See my castle Dipperbowl if you want to talk about castles."

"Oho!" said the bird softly. "We shall see what we shall see." And she sang of a little door and a silver key and a princess who could escape if one kissed her.

"Sheer stupidity!" said the troll. "There should be but

one door and after all that was a window. As for the princess, she should not escape unless she were flicked upon the head with a green thimble."

"So?" said the bird softly. "That's enough for the present, thank you." And she chirped aloud, "Oh look quickly, what a pretty sight!"

By this time you must know the sun was getting up, and it stood like a yellow pancake on top of a hill. As the troll turned round he caught it full in his eyes. Of course he burst at once, and that was the end of him.

Well, nothing would do but that Boots must have the princess.

"In that case," said the cat, "the quern must tell us where is the troll's castle."

The quern ground for as much as an hour, but no answer could he grind to that question. "At the most," he whirled in a thin voice—for he was tuckered out, poor fellow!—"I can only grind who knows the way." His voice grew weaker and weaker until at last it was no more than a burr-r. "Inquire of the North Wind," he sputtered. "Inquire of the North Wind. I can grind no more, and that's flat!" He stopped exhausted, but after a moment he recovered enough to say feebly, "It's very wearing to grind when you have nothing to grind on."

But Boots was not one whit the wiser for all this.

"As for the North Wind," said the cat, "nothing is more

simple.” With that she arched her back until her tail grew as large as a pump-handle. “Take hold of my tail!” she cried.

Boots gathered up the quern which lay upon the ground as limp as a string, and strapped it on his back. Then he grasped hold of the cat’s tail. She gave a leap into the air and away they went, the bird circling about and the cat spitting and swelling and growing every moment more fiery and bristly. As for Boots, he streamed out behind like a pair of breeches on a clothes line. You may be sure at such a pace they soon came to the North Wind’s house.

The North Wind was as cross as two sticks. “Blast you!” he roared out. “What do you want?” To tell the truth, he didn’t like to see anyone make almost as much disturbance as himself.

“Well,” said the cat, and she shivered in spite of her fire, “you needn’t treat us so coldly. We want to go to the troll’s castle Dipperbowl. You seem to be blowing around considerably. Do you know where it is?”

The North Wind was somewhat moderated. Yes, he knew well enough where it was. Once he blew a cloud there, and he was so tired he couldn’t puff for a week. But he would try it again if they wanted to go and weren’t afraid.

Yes, with all their hearts they did; as for fear, the thought was ridiculous. So they got on his back and the North

Wind grew as stout and as big as a thousand bagpipes. He tore on and tore on as though he would never stop until he came to the edge of the world. But he got so tired that he drooped until the water splashed his heels. At last he stopped. "I can go no farther," he panted. "I have no breath left."

Coax as she might, the cat could not get him to budge an inch more. She might tease until she was all over goose-flesh, but he wouldn't, and there was an end to it. Then you should have seen the cat. She became blue and yellow for rage. She spit at the North Wind and blew him up soundly. She stormed so that in very mortification he consented to try once more.

So Boots crouched on his back again, and they tore on and tore on until again the North Wind began to flag. But they were near the island that grows in the middle of the sky, and he had just strength enough left to toss them up under the shelter of the Castle Dipperbowl. And then he crawled home, and was so hoarse for a week that he couldn't speak above a whisper.

As for Boots and the rest, when the first peep of day came they saw a hag who sat in the cleft of the rock and span.

"She knows the way to the wall," said the cat. "See what you can make out of her."

So Boots stepped up to the hag. "By your leave, good mother," he said.





"Here I sit and spin," said the hag. "But never so much as a blanket can I spin to warm my skin and bones."

"Stick a pin in that!" whispered the cat to Boots.

So he said: "Good mother, if you will show me the way to the wall, I will give you a cat who can make blankets for you."

"That is out of the whole cloth," said the hag.

"Gammon!" quickly put in the cat. "There is a blanket for you." And sure enough there one was.

Then the hag jumped at the bargain you may be sure. "The way," she cried, "is two steps to the right and one to the left until you get there. Hey, hey, and much good may it do you!" So Boots gave her the cat, and with the bird and the quern went along two to the right and one to the left, and every minute the castle came nearer. Soon they met another hag who sat in the roots of a tree and coined.

"She knows the way into the princess's chamber," chirped the bird. "See what you can make out of her."

So Boots stepped up. "By your leave, good mother," he said.

"Here I sit and coin," said the hag. "But never so much as a penny can I get to buy bacon with."

"Hit that nail on the head!" whispered the bird.

So he said, "Good mother, if you'll tell me the way into the princess's chamber, I'll give you a bird who can coin money for you."

"Such things are better seen," said the hag.

"Indeed?" returned the bird. And flying into her hands she laid two pennies there.

You may believe the hag clutched them greedily. "The way is through the diamond window. If you cry *snip snout*, it will open for you. Hey, hey and much good may it do you!"

So leaving the bird, Boots went on with the quern, and was soon under the very walls of the castle. There sat another



hag, and by her was a great tub. Every Saturday morning as soon as the sun was up she gave the stars a bath. She soused them in the tub and washed off seven days' dust

from them. On her finger was a green thimble which she flicked them on the head with when they wriggled.

"By your leave, good mother," said Boots.

"Here it is Friday," cried the hag. "And tomorrow morning I have my week's washing to do. And I'm clear out of bluing. Never a bit more can I get until the sea casts up some from the icebergs."

"I'm your grist for that mill," whispered the quern to Boots.

"Give me," said Boots, "that green thimble of yours, and I'll give you a quern that will grind all the bluing you want."

"Heaven help you, what a lie! That's all that I can say," returned the hag.

"Not exactly!" retorted the quern. He put himself to work quite cheerily and ground a stream of bluing three yards long. The old hag didn't gape twice at such an offer.

"Take your thimble," she said, "Hey, hey and much good may it do you!" And she cackled and cackled as if she could tell a grand joke if she wanted to.

So Boots took the thimble and went up close to the wall. There was no door, but far up he spied a latticed window. "*Snip snout!*" he cried aloud, and the window let itself down and opened of its own accord. He walked in, and there stood the prettiest princess in the world. He gave her a little flick on her golden curls with the green thimble. "I have come to take you away and marry you," he said.

"Agreed!" said the princess, for you must know Boots was no clown to look at. So she went to pack her trunk. When she came back, she brought a little wooden shoe. "With this," she said, "we can have all the wishes we want. Let's wish ourselves home at once."

"Not so fast, my dear," said Boots. "It's a poor sort of man that leaves his friends in the lurch. First I must buy back my cat and my bird and my quern from those honest hags. The shoe won't pinch us what ever they ask, since we can have all the wishes we want."

"Honest hags indeed?" cried the princess. "The troll's sisters is what they are, and they must have laughed to see how you paid for your own picking. They tell everybody the way that comes along. The troll gobbles him up and gives them the bones. He might have gobbled even you, if he'd been at home where they thought he was."

"Oh, might he!" laughed Boots. "Then it's a bone I have to pick with them instead of they with me. But I know a joke worth two of theirs."

He took the shoe in his hand, and wished for a cat and a bird and a quern to take the place of the ones he had left with the hags. And there in a trice were his old traveling companions. Then they all wished themselves home, and poof! that's where they were.

As for the three hags, as soon as they could they hobbled together, like the three gadabout gossips they were. Each

held tight to her wonderful bargain—which after all didn't amount to so many meal husks, for Boots had taken the real ones home with him. "Look you, sisters!" they called out to each other.

The first took the cat by the tail and said, "Make me two blankets." But instead of that, the cat scratched and clawed her until she screeched with pain.

The second hag sneered, "What is there so wonderful in that?" Placing the bird in her hand, she squeezed it and said, "Make me two pennies!" But the bird only gave a feeble chirp.

"Why do you bore us with that?" said the third hag scornfully. She pointed to the great tub full of bluing water which she had put ready for her week's washing. "See this quern which has ground it all. Grind, quern!" she called out. But the quern lay as stock still as any other piece of wood.

At this she grew purple with rage and kicked it violently, so that it flew off into the sky—where you may see it falling still, of a clear night. As for the bluing water, it gave her such dumps whenever she looked at it that she turned the tub upside down, and the water ran out and filled every chink of the sky. And that's why the sky is blue.



The Boys' Mother

*The Story of the Princess  
that married the Boy who used to be One-Sided.*  
**WHY THINGS COME IN THREES**



ONCE upon a time there was an old woman who lived where the ground was always covered with water, and she had three sons. The first was as tall as a mast, the second was as wide as a door, and third was as thin as a pancake. The one who was tall was just tall and nothing else—he had no width and no thickness; and the one who was wide had no height, and you could see through him; and the one who was as thin as a pancake was a good square fellow if only there had been anything else to him worth mentioning.

All this was very annoying to the old woman, you may be

sure. "If I could only roll the three of you into one," she scolded, "you might be some good to me instead of just eating me out of house and home. You might sweep away this water and uncover the ground and plant turnips and cabbages. And we should have some food besides this everlasting fish."

The three boys thought they were quite good enough as they were. They had never seen anybody different except their mother, and they thought all old people must be queer. But the old woman had come from another country where people had more sides to their nature. The folk there when they wanted things knew how to get at them. But here were all her boys growing up one-sided, and so they never could get anything done. And the country all a waste of water with the rich ground just underneath it! If they could only sweep the water away and uncover the ground and plant things, why there was no end to what might come of it. Now there was only fish, and just little ones at that. As for the boys, nothing but tallness and wideness and thickness as they were, they all had stomachs you may be sure. The old woman was busy day and night catching fish for them. But the more she caught the taller grew the tall one, the wider grew the wide one, and the thicker grew the thick one. No amount of fish ever seemed to make them grow any other way. It was enough to make a poor woman cry. But she was a sensible body and she just kept on catching fish, since

she thought to herself goodness knows there was enough water anyway.

Now don't ask me why the boys didn't catch their own fish. Didn't I tell you they were all one-sided? If you are unfortunate enough to grow up all one way, you simply can't accomplish anything, even catching fish. Of course, they were amiable enough to try. The boy who was tall would do well enough for a pole, and the boy who was thin did well enough for a string, and the boy who was wide did well enough for a net to scoop up the fishes in. But even a fish is more than a match for one-sided creatures. They would swim merrily into the net that the wide boy made of himself, for they knew they could swim right out through him when they had a mind, because he had no thickness; and even if they couldn't, the boy who was the string couldn't pull them up because he had no stiffness; and the boy who was the pole couldn't lift them out of the water because he would keep on bending as long as there was something to pull him down at the other end. And if you think this is a great deal for a fish under water to see with one eye on top of it, you haven't much experience with fish. Anyway, try as they might, the boys never caught any.

But, try as the old woman might to make the best of a bad hatch, she used to grumble at having all the work to do herself. When she saw that for all her catching fish for them until she was just skin and bones, there was no sign of their

growing any other way, she burst out suddenly. "Be off with you somewhere, and find out how to grow in more than one way at once. Fish is no food for year in and year out. We must sweep away this water and uncover the land and plant turnips and cabbages. As the folk did in the country I came from."

The boys thought they were well enough as they were, and they only laughed. That's the way with one-sided people, they're always so satisfied.

"What's the good of being anything but tall?" said the tall boy.

"And if I were thick I couldn't be so nice and wide," said the second boy.

"And why must one come in threes?" said the third boy.

"What lumpy people they were in the land that you came from!" they cried all together.

This made the old woman provoked, you may believe. She wasn't going to hear her own father and mother made fun of. Especially since they had turnips and cabbages and didn't have to eat fish all the time. "Out you go!" she cried. "Not another fish do I feed you. One boy with two other sides to him is more use than three without any! You needn't come back until you've learned to grow in other directions."

Well, the boys were quite willing, for they wanted to see if the world was made only of water. They kissed the old

woman goodbye—for in spite of her having so many extra sides to her nature, they loved her dearly and thought that she was cross at times only because she wasn't like them. And they set out gaily. But they had quite made up their minds to one thing. Let her say what she pleased, they would keep on growing only one way. They guessed they knew what they were about! So the wide boy lay down on the top of the water like a raft, and the tall boy stood on him like a mast, and the thin boy looped from his shoulders to his middle like a P and made a sail out of himself. And away they all blew, over the waste of water that covered all the rich land which might have been growing cabbages and turnips as it did in their mother's country where the queer people lived that had more than one side to their nature.

But to start on a fine sail is one thing, and to go on sailing and sailing without even a fish at dinner time is another. And of course there was no way to stop until something stopped them. By the time they touched the shore you may believe that they would gladly have eaten even a periwinkle. When something stopped them and they found it was the shore, they undid themselves and became just three boys again. And the first thing the one-sided things thought of was to wade back into the water and begin looking for fish. Much good it would have done them if they had found any, for they didn't know how to catch them. But as they were wading about, what should they spy a little way on the shore

but a row of apple trees full of fruit. Though they had never seen a shore or trees on it or fruit upon the trees, they thought the red round things looked good to eat, and they ran toward them you may believe. The tall boy just reached into the tree and touched the apples and the ripest fell on the ground, and those that didn't he didn't know how to get off. But plenty of them fell down for a great feast. They thought it would be easy to get food in this strange country; and the apples were so much better to eat than fish, they thought they would never go back to their mother, especially as she had said she would catch no more fish for them and they couldn't catch any for themselves.

As they were eating the apples, what should they spy but some people. "Look, look!" they cried to each other. "There are lumpy people like mother. How funny they all are!"

When the lumpy people spied them, they flocked up at once. "Look, look! See the tall boy and the wide boy and the thin boy. They have all only one side to them. Ho, ho, what figures they cut!"

The lumpy people only laughed the heartier when they saw the boys laugh at them, but the boys were angry when the lumpy people laughed at *them*. "How dare you laugh at us!" they cried. "You who are all just alike and so ordinary!" But the ordinary people only laughed the heartier, and would pay no more attention to them. "Come, come,"

said they, "let us go on. These boys are amusing for a moment, but they are too one-sided to be worth talking to even." And they went on laughing gaily.

But a gray-headed man stayed behind, and when the rest were out of hearing he said to the boys, "Excuse me, I do not want to hurt your feelings. You do not seem to know how ridiculous you are with your one-sidedness. I must tell you also that unless you get more sides you can never be good for anything."

Now the boys were as angry as one-sided creatures well can be. "Be off!" they shouted. "We are quite well enough as we are. Do not disturb us at our dinner."

"Yes, yes, my fine lads. It is all well enough to be one-sided when you can find ripe apples growing on trees. But what will you do when there are no trees and no apples? You must have three sides, I can tell you, for cabbages and turnips."

Cabbages and turnips! They had heard all that before from their mother. Really, it was too tiresome. They threw their apples at the old man and pelted him away. But the old man was not angry in his turn, though he might well have been. "You will see," he said without even taking the trouble to dodge, and he went away laughing at boys who couldn't even aim apples or throw them.

When the boys had eaten their fill, they thought they would like to go further into this strange country where

there was no water except in neat little ditches instead of spilled all over everything. At each step they saw new and wonderful sights. Never had they imagined any of the marvelous things that were in this country. Even the apples they had thought were round fishes caught in the nets of a strange kind of sea-weed. The only thing they saw like anything they had seen before were the people, because they were lumpy like their mother. These people all burst out laughing the moment they spied them and flocked around quite rudely. But they all went away in a moment, saying, "Pshaw! What is the sense of being so tall and so wide and so thick if you have to be one-sided."

It did not need much of this, you may be sure, to make the boys more determined than ever that nothing could persuade them to resemble persons who all looked alike and gabbled foolishly. If these people didn't know how much nicer it was to be one-sided, and each a different side, it was all the worse for them. Nevertheless, now when they met new lumpy people, each boy began to try to show only the front of him to strangers. Carelessly, of course, as if it just happened so and he had no such notion. But it was all to no purpose. Stand still, or walk backwards, or whirl about suddenly as they passed, it was all the same. It was never long before these wretched lumpy persons found out how one-sided they were. They would stop a moment to laugh and then go on about their business.

So at length the three brothers left the high road and struck across the fields and over the hills. But though they grew hungry they came across no more round red fish in the trees, for they had gone away from the paths of people in their desire not to be laughed at. When they had trudged for hours over a desolate heath, they saw in the distance a stone castle. Toward it they made with all speed, for now they were so tired and hungry they cared not who laughed at them. But as they came nearer they saw no soul or sign of life. Their hearts sank, for they would rather have been laughed at than starve to death.

Now this castle was the home of a robber giant. He had gone on one of his evil jaunts, and left locked up in the top room a princess he had captured. She stood high up in the window and looked out, scanning the heath for someone to rescue her from the robber giant. When the boys had come near enough to spy her, she was the only sign of life in the high stone castle, and her window the only opening they could spy in the grey wall.

She beckoned with her hands for them to come closer, and they came. They saw that she had long yellow hair and her face under it was white as milk. Never had they seen anything that made them feel so queer at heart. There were many queer feelings at their hearts, but one and all they were glad that this yellow and white creature could see only the front side of them, and they were very careful, you may

believe, not to show her their backs. But she beckoned them still nearer, and after a moment, seeing that from where she stood she could not guess that they were one-sided, they went closer. But they took care not to place themselves in a position where she could look down upon them.

Out of the window she leaned and wrung her hands, and they saw that her arms were as white as milk. "Save me!" she cried. "A robber giant has captured and shut me up here."

The boys looked at each other while their hearts kept on feeling queerer and queerer. How could they tell this beautiful creature that they were so one-sided they could do nothing! Seeing their hesitation she leaned out further, until part of her yellow hair fell down over the gray stone wall.

"Have no fear of him," she cried. "He is away on his evil jaunts, and there is no one at home. The door to my chamber is locked, and so high from the ground is my window that he leaves me with no one to guard me. But the tall one needs but stand on tiptoe and reach up, and almost can I spring into his arms."

Oh my, that was just what the tall one wanted her to do! So you may believe that he was covered with confusion. How could he own to this beautiful creature that his arms would crinkle and let her drop? But he kept feeling queerer

and queerer at heart, and he had to say something. So taking care not to move a step nearer lest she should see that he had nothing back of him, he cast up his arms to show her that they would come short. "You see," he said, "they do not reach high enough. And oh, suppose you should miss them!"

At this the beautiful creature leaned farther out of the window and her yellow hair fell farther down around her milk-white face and arms, and she wrung her hands piteously. "Nay," she cried, "it needs but the thick one to stand upon, and then you can reach me."

Now it was the thick one's turn to be covered with confusion. How could he tell this beautiful creature that his thickness was but jelly, that if his brother should stand upon him he would mash flat? "No, no, I fear you would fall and break if you should jump," he stammered.

Again the beautiful creature wrung her milk-white hands and wept. Until she spied through her tears the thin one. "See. He is so thin that the tall one standing upon the other's back could hold him on his shoulders. Then I could surely step right out from the window into his arms."

But the thin one edged away in bitter shame for his one-sidedness. He knew well enough that the poor creature might as well step off onto a basting thread. "No, no," he said in confusion, "I—you—"

Then the beautiful creature saw how the land lay, and

that they all hung back from helping her. She fell into such a flood of tears, and such a wringing of milkwhite hands through yellow hair that the hearts of the three were pin-cushions, so much did pity and shame stick into them. They forgot what they had all been so anxious to conceal, and ran forward to comfort her. So directly beneath her eyes as she hung out of the window that her tears splashed on their three heads.

When she saw what she saw, up she straightened in astonishment and dismay. "Oh, oh," she cried. "Now I shall never get out! I thought you were people, but you are only fronts. How can you help me if you have nothing back of you? Oh, oh!"

The three boys, bitterly ashamed as they were, nevertheless were so relieved when she had not laughed at them like all the rest that they began to weep for joy. "Tell us," they cried all at once, "how we can help you, and we will be very much obliged. Until we met you, we were pleased at ourselves but now we are sorry that we grew up that way. If we can help you all one-sided as we are, or if we can get more sides to help you with, please tell us at once how to do so!"

"I have it," she cried. "The melting pot!"

"The melting pot?" they all echoed.

Down she leaned again, yellow hair and all, over the window-sill. "Yes, yes, that will do it if anything can. The

robber giant who captured me knows a tame monster in yonder wood. When he comes home from his evil jaunts with all the silver ware he has stolen, he feeds it to the monster, and the monster melts it up for him into silver bricks. Perhaps if you walked into his mouth and down into his interior, you too would come back in another shape, and with the proper number of sides."

The boys looked at each other in consternation.

"Has he teeth?" cried the tall boy.

"Will he bite?" cried the wide boy.

"How tame is he?" cried the thick boy.

"And how can we be sure that if we go down we shall ever come up?" cried all of them together.

"No fear of that," she answered, "When the robber giant thinks his things are baked enough, he just tickles the monster on the outside and makes him laugh and out they come."

"Yes, yes," but we shall be *inside*," the boys cried all together.

"All the better," she said as she clapped her milk-white hands. "If you tickle him from the inside, you will be sure to come up. Whether he bakes you or not, no one can tell until you've tried. But I'm sure you won't be any the worse off when you've come up, and you may be better. If so, you can save me. Are you willing to try?"

Yes, the boys were willing indeed, for one-sidedness had

come to a pretty pass if it couldn't even get a beautiful milk-white creature out of a window.

"But what," said the tall boy, "if the robber giant gets back before we come up?"

"No fear of that. He has gone for a week."

"And left you to die of hunger?" cried the wide boy, who, if the truth were known, was by this time almost dying of hunger himself.

"No fear of that. When he's away on his evil jaunts, he leaves me seven days' food. It's all here in my reach, each day in a basket."

"In your reach?" cried the thin boy anxiously."

"Yes, but I cannot touch a bit of it, I am in such distress."

All the boys sprang up into the air, never caring whether she saw their backs or not. "Then reach some of it to us!" they called in one voice. "We have never gone so long in our lives without fish."

"Oh, you poor dears," said the milk-white creature. She went and got her first-day basket and let it down to them by her yellow hair. They fell upon it, you may be sure, since



they had had nothing to eat that day but apples. When she saw how famished they were, she went and got her second-day basket and her third-day basket, and let them down by her yellow hair. When they had finished the last crumb, she bade them tie the baskets on her hair again. "But take out the bread-and-butter knife from yours," she said to the wide boy, "and put it in your pocket to tickle the monster with."

Then they tied on the three baskets all at a time, and she pulled them up and put them back with the others, and she told them where they could find the monster at home, and bid them goodbye.

Off they started, with such good hearts that they never thought twice about showing her their backs. Into the woods they trudged, and to the cavern. There at the door sat the mouth of the monster, as big as the cavern itself, and his body trailing away into the bowels of the earth.

"Ho, ho!" said the monster in high good humor. He only saw their fronts, and he thought what a fine meal he should be having. "What are you come here for, my gay sprigs?"

"If you please," said the boys, "we want to explore your interior."

"Oho, explorers is what you are going in for?" said the monster. If that was what they called being gobbled, why should he tell them different? "Yes, yes! I provide a fine finishing course for explorers. But I haven't room at present

for the three of you together. I must take you one a day."

Dear me, thought the boys to themselves, that will never do. Three days! What if the robber giant should come back earlier than he had planned? "Please, monster, haven't you room in your interior for all of us at once? We always do things in threes."

"Hoity toity!" said the monster. "You must do as I say if you want to go into *my* interior. I think I may have a vacancy for the tall boy. Tall boy, come here and let me look you over to see whether I want you in my interior."

But no sooner had he approached than the monster bellowed with rage and blew him away. "Poof, you are one-sided! I will have nothing to do with one-sided creatures. Wide boy, come here and let me look you over and see whether I want you in my interior."

Again the monster bellowed with rage and blew him away. "Flat boy, come here and let me look you over to see whether I want you in my interior." And the third time the monster bellowed with rage and he blew the third boy spinning, flat as he was.

Now the boys would have been aghast at this if they hadn't had something queer just then to think about. As each boy had gone up to be looked over by the monster, the others had seen the back of him of course. And he was not so one-sided as he used to be! Not that he was two-sided by any means, to say nothing of being three-sided. But the

one side that he was had just the slightest of extensions—so slight that it never would have been noticed at all if they hadn't been so used to seeing him entirely one-sided. Now, the boys didn't know it, but the moment they had eaten the apples they had begun to thicken, and of course when they finished all there was in the first-day and the second-day and the third-day baskets they had thickened considerable more, so that now there was rather a sizeable shading to the fronts of them. For, really, it was eating nothing but fish morn and noon and night that had made them one-sided.

But, shading or not, there were no two ways about it, and the monster would not admit them since they were one-sided. All the same if they did but know it, the monster was just as disappointed as they were. He saw his fine meal getting away from him, and all because he had made it a rule never to take in one-sided people. While the boys were wondering what to do, he was at the same game himself. Finally, he saw a way to break and keep his rule at the same time.

"Stay," he rumbled. "I can take the three of you at once. Since you are what you are, the three of you can squeeze in where there would have been room for only one. Join hands now and come along." And he stuck out his great tongue like a red brick sidewalk.

But the three boys hung back. It was not that they were not willing, for they wanted to help the milk-white creature

and they were sorry they had grown up one-sided. Nor was it that they were afraid, for they were sure she knew what she was talking about and that they should come out safe and sound. Why then? You'll never guess what it was made them all hang back. It was jealousy. Each was saying to himself: If we go in all three at once and grow three-sided, perhaps it will be with each other's sides! We shall lose our individuality.

The tall boy said to himself: "Perhaps I shall not be I when I have his breadth and *his* thickness."

The flat boy said to himself: "Maybe he'll be me when I have his length, or the other when I have his breadth."

And the fat boy said to himself: "Who shall *I* be if there are three of me?"

So they hung about and hung about, lest the one that came out should be someone else who would go back and save the milkwhite princess.

But at last the thin boy spoke out. Now the thin boy had been at work on his basket before the others had theirs let down to them, and then he had gobbled as much of theirs as he could also, and of course as he had had more food he had less one-sidedness. "Come on," he said to the others. "Who's afraid! Whichever it will be he will be the others too, won't he? Better be three in one than not one in the three of us."

But still the other two hung back and hung back.

Then the third boy spoke up again. "Do you wish lumpy people always to laugh at us? Do you expect always to find fishes growing on trees? Do you want to starve to death unless women feed you all your life? I don't care whether I am you or you are me or whichever. I want to be able to get my own food, and as fine as any that grows in baskets."

At the mention of baskets the other two made up their minds at once.

They took each other's hands and they walked, just as if they weren't scared to death, right onto the tip of the monster's tongue and up the red path. When they came under his great jaw, it grew darker, and they drew closer together until they linked elbows. When they went down the tunnel instead of going up and it grew darker and darker, they squeezed closer and closer until their arms were tight about each other's waists. And when they went down farther still and it was midnight, the two outside boys reached around their loose hands and caught each other. And in another step they had come to the jumping-off place, and suddenly they fell. All in a ball, holding tight to each other, and rolling over and over headlong and footlong down the black shaft.

When they struck bottom, the thin boy whispered to the others: "Now to tickle him when we've baked long enough! Let go my arm, so that I can put my hand in my pocket and get out my knife."

He wiggled his arm free.



110.



"Why, that's my arm," whispered the tall boy.

"No, it's mine," whispered the wide boy.

But the thin boy slipped the arm into his pocket.

"Why, that's my pocket," called the tall boy.

"No, it's mine," called the wide boy.

"Well, whosoever it is, I think we're baked, and here goes," whispered the tall boy. He stuck the knife into the wall of the monster's interior. The boys heard a rumble and a grumble and a jerk and a snort. But what they heard on the outside of them was nothing to what they felt on the inside of them. Something banged and whizzed and clicked sharp all at once in their heads, like things sliding into place and fitting together.

"What is happening?" cried the tall boy.

"What is—," cried the wide boy.

"What—" cried the thin boy.

But what it was none of them ever knew. All at once with a crack on the inside and a snort on the outside up through the black tunnel and into daylight and out of the red mouth of the monster, shot—ONE boy. One boy *with* a length *and* a breadth *and* a thickness.

The first thing he knew he was picking himself up at a safe distance from the monster, who was rumbling and roaring and shaking and quaking as if he had just had the most awful toothache in his stomach you can imagine. The three-sided boy who had been the three one-sided boys

rubbed his eyes to see where the others were. "Where are you?" he called. Of course he got no answer, but he didn't need any. For before he knew it he had called three times and he saw all at once it was the three of him calling and he guessed the answer. And the two boys that made the other sides of him were just as happy as he was, for each boy thought *he* was the boy and the others were *his* two sides.

So off he started at once to the milkwhite creature. He found her at the window, yellow hair and white arms and two hands wringing. She waved to him with her two hands the moment she saw him; and as he was running to her, he cried out for her to fetch all the other baskets. By the time he was at the gray wall there she was, baskets and everything. She had tied them all to her hair in a jiffy and was ready to jump into his arms. And since he was the tall boy, she had just the least bit of a way to jump, and since he was the wide boy and the thick boy, he could hold her just as tight as anything. He set her down and they ate everything in the four baskets, and they ran away as fast as their legs could carry them.

Off they went to her father's, where everything was as grand as could be. And of course her father made him marry her at once.

But no sooner were they married and he could catch his breath than he asked: "Where shall we get some more

basket-fish, my dear? Fish that grow in baskets are even nicer than fish that grow on trees.”

“Fish?” she said. “That was good white bread that grows out of the ground and butter on it, and cabbages and turnips and things.”

Cabbages and turnips! That made him think of his mother at once, you may believe. “Pack your trunk, my dear! I’m off to sweep away the water from our house and uncover the ground and plant cabbages and turnips and things.”

“Oh, oh!” she cried. “Can’t you make yourself at home in my father’s palace?”

“Pooh!” he said. “Shall I live in other people’s houses and on other people’s food like a one-sided creature? When I sweep out the water and uncover the ground, I’ll build you twenty palaces. Now I have length and breadth and thickness. Whoever has those has enough to do anything he wants, and whoever hasn’t can do just nothing at all.”

And that’s why things come in threes.



The Fairy Godmother

*The Story of the Fifth Princess.*  
**HOW FAY TIGGLE CHANGED HER NAME  
 AND HER CHRISTENING GIFT**



ONCE upon a time there was a girl who had a wooden eye. It was two sizes too small for her and the lid flapped when she walked. This was the way it came about.

When she was old enough to be baptized, her father and mother sent far and wide inviting everybody to the christening.

Now, among their acquaintances was an agéd fairy whom the good woman's great-aunt had once managed to benefit in some way. You may rest assured she had a card in the first batch. Well, the bread was made and the christening cake was baked and the house tidied up for the guests. The last one to come was the agéd fairy, and for

that reason she was not in a very good humor. All the people, however, politely looked out of the window and said, "What a fine day for the babe!" as if they had not been kept waiting. But for all this the fairy noticed what quarter the wind was in and she grew crosser still. To tell the truth, she was not at all ill-tempered by nature, but she had put the wrong foot out of bed first that morning, and everything had been at sixes and sevens with her all day; and having somewhat passed her prime she was just a trifle peevish, as elderly fairies are apt to be. Then too, the christening broth was cold, and of course that did not improve matters.

Well, the mother held the child in her arms while the father received the mugs and the knives and forks and spoons which the guest had brought as gifts. One by one they passed up, and last of all came the agéd fairy's turn. She was to name the child, and the people expected wonderful things of her. They stood around with open mouths like country folk at a fair. This, you may be sure, did not make matters any better. For fairies, as everybody knows, dislike above all things to be stared at.

Just as the agéd fairy got to the baptism bowl, she paused with becoming dignity and arranged her skirts. The people waited eagerly. She heard one woman whisper to another: "Well, I hope she'll cut a figure now, after keeping us waiting so long!" At this the fairy went into a violent rage. To tell

the truth, she had been thinking all the way over of a name for the child and had finally hit upon a most beautiful one of five syllables. But when she heard this, she forgot all about it and cried angrily: "The child's name shall be Fay Tickle. And naught shall I give her but a wooden eye!"

At this the mother clasped her child in alarm and her terrified glance fell on its face. There, sure enough, instead of one of her blue eyes was a wooden one; and as the child stirred, the lid flapped noisily. Of course the mother fell into a swoon at once, and the guests cried out in dismay and terror.

No one felt so bad as the aged fairy—but a wish is a wish, and she couldn't take it back. She thought for two hours of some way to get out of it. At last she said: "When the child is sixteen, she must go to the World's End and we shall see what happens." She hoped by that time she would be able to think up a plan. So saying, she kissed the child for good luck and drove sadly away. The mother and father and all the rest were in a terrible pothor, but there was no help for it. There was the wooden eye, and Fay Tickle she was and Fay Tickle she had to be.

In due time the baby grew into a fine girl. For all her wooden eye, she was extremely pretty and sweet-natured. She seemed to have brought good luck also, for nothing ever was seen to equal the prosperity of the farm. They kept adding spare-room after spare-room to the house, and the barns were as plump as ripe chestnuts. It looked as if the

agéd fairy were doing all in her power to make up for her peevishness at the christening. In a short while, the girl had passed her awkward age and had become as sweet and winning as anyone might wish to see, and by all odds the catch of the neighborhood. In spite of all, however, there was no getting around the fact that her disfigurement was a great eye-sore.

So on her sixteenth birthday her mother said to her: "Go, my child, to the World's End and we shall see what happens. I make no doubt but your godmother will guide your steps and protect you from all harm."

Well, the daughter was willing, for she had an amiable disposition. So, receiving her parents' blessing, Fay Tigger set forth upon her travels, not knowing in which direction to put one foot before the other. She clicked the gate behind her and off she started, her wooden eye flapping as she walked. Past house and hedge she went, until the road became a cart-rut, and the cart-rut a footpath into the forest. She was very tired and she thought she must surely be near the World's End.

Now, in this forest lived three robbers, who were sitting at their fire making merry over their day's booty as Fay Tigger went wearily along the way.

"Listen!" said one, as he drank his draught. "Hear you naught?"

Up went the ears of the others and they strained their

necks into the darkness. They heard distinctly a faint tramp and a clicking like the far-off march of a band of men armed with swords.

“Ha!” said the second robber, putting down his cup. “There will be soldiers there!”

Nearer came the tramp accompanied by its regular click. A moment they waited in growing consternation. They heard a crackling of twigs and a swish of leaves. They could stand it no longer. “Masks on and fly!” whispered the third robber. In a trice there was not so much as one left. And parting the branches, with a heavy heart, came Fay Tuggle wearily wending her way, the wooden eye flapping as she walked.

There before her burned a bright fire with meat on the spit and drink on the settle, and strewn around lay bags of gold and other booty. Gladly she flung herself down and ate and drank, for she was well nigh famished. When she had her fill, she looked about her and saw she had fallen upon a robbers’ den. Nevertheless, she could go no further that night for weariness; and hoping to awake before their return, she lay down to sleep. She need not have feared, for they were too badly frightened even to stop to take breath.

In the morning Fay Tuggle awoke with a start and looked fearfully around. When she saw that the robbers had not yet come back, she kindled the fire and got her a bite of breakfast. Then she prepared to set forth on her journey





again. Never a piece of gold did she touch nor so much as a penny. But she put in her pocket a little snack to eat on the way. Now, as she was cutting the bread and making the snack, she spied lying open on the ground a golden snuff-box. On the lid in raised letters was this inscription: "*This snuff is mixed with water from the Spring of the World's End. Go around the Church of Nix Nowhere three times WIDER-SHINS.*"

You may guess that Fay Tiggle hopped for joy. She sat down and learned the inscription by heart and then once more she set out on her journey. Through the forest she went and into the sun on the other side and through the hop fields until dusk. There upon a stone she met a Woman of Sixty. She curtsied to her as she had been taught, and said respectfully: "Can you tell me, ma'am, the way to the Church of Nix-Nowhere?"

"That I can," answered the Woman of Sixty. "It is on the road to Naught and the way to get there is to sit under the hop vines for two days and three nights, with one thing to do, and one thing not to do. And the one thing to do is this. Ceaselessly must you say this rhyme without pause or peace—

*Naught is Aught  
And Aught is All Things;  
It is merely a matter  
Of what you call things.*

And what you've not to do is this. Bite no bit and sip no sup, however hungry or thirsty you may be, until the time is up."

"Thank you, ma'am!" said Fay Tiggie gratefully.

"Not at all," answered the Woman of Sixty. "Delighted to be of service."

Fay Tiggie curtsied again and went on. She found herself a sheltered place among the vines, and just at nightfall she sat herself down and began to repeat the rhyme she had learned. All night without pause or peace she continued. In the morning the birds came and chirped around her, and the rabbits and the ground squirrels. Without stopping in her rhyme, she pulled from her pocket the snack she had got from the robbers' den; and crumbling some of it in her hand, she threw it to them to eat. They kept her company all day; and so the first day passed.

The second night she caught cold and became so hoarse she could scarcely speak. But on she went in a whisper without pause or peace until dawn. She feared that the sound would soon give out altogether, and then she must begin all over again some other time. When the morning came, the birds and the rabbits and the ground squirrels flocked around her as before, hoping to be fed again from her hand. She had only a few crusts of the snack left, but she crumbled them up and scattered them on the ground. When the last scrap was picked up, with a whirr they all scampered

away. Fay Tiggie thought sadly that she should see them no more. But she kept on whispering her rhyme, although now she could not hear any sound at all. In a few moments her friends all returned. Each bird bore in his bill and each rabbit and ground squirrel held in his paws a tiny strip of slippery elm, a flaxseed or two, or a small lozenge of horehound. They laid them in a pile in her lap with many twitters and expressions of gratitude. Fay Tiggie smiled her thanks for the aid thus kindly offered; and, with great care not to pause in her rhyme or to bite a bit, she slipped a piece of slippery elm into her mouth. And soon her hoarseness was so relieved that she got back her voice.

Thus all through the day and the next night she kept on repeating without pause or peace:

*Naught is Aught  
And Aught is All Things  
It is merely a matter  
Of what you call things.*

Just as the sun shot up the third day, she ceased at last. There plainly glittering in the morning light were the spires of Nix-Nowhere. They had come from nowhere, but there they were! She sprang up and ran toward it. In a trice she reached it, and without stopping she ran around it three times *widershins*—that is, opposite the sun—and as you may imagine, her wooden eye kept flapping furiously.

The last time she encircled the church she bounced breathlessly into a hen-wife. Of course she apologized at once, and told her tale. The hen-wife was very much interested and



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gave her all the necessary directions for finding the Spring of the World's End. They were very simple, for every time Fay Tiggie had gone around the church *widershins* she had really gone a thousand miles; and now she was at the place where the East and West are one, and of course that's the World's End, for if you go one step further you begin all over again.

The hen-wife said good-bye at the church door, for of course she didn't wish to intrude. Fay Tiggie thanked her for her kindness. And the hen-wife said: "Not at all, not at all. Delighted to be of service."

"I wish you'd go with me," said Fay Tiggie.

"With all my heart," said the hen-wife.

So arm in arm they walked, and keeping time to their steps sounded the flapping of the wooden eye. Through the

field they went and down the stone steps. There bubbling before them in its moss-covered bowl lay the Spring of the World's End. Fay Tiggles gave a cry of delight as she darted to it and stooped at the brink.

"Nay," said the hen-wife quickly. "Strange things have happened and stranger may! Remember the way out. You have but to stub your toe on the second step, and wherever you wish, there you'll be."

She nodded violently, and one might have seen that she was much excited. She reached down and scooped up some of the sparkling water in her hand. "Drink," she cried.

Fay Tiggles bent her head and sipped of the magical water. She had no sooner done so than she sneezed three times. At the third sneeze out hopped the wooden eye and in its stead was a beautiful new one as blue as a china mug and a perfect match of the other.

As for the wooden eye, down it fell flopping into the Spring and lay bobbing upon the shiny water. In the meantime something odd was happening to the hen-wife. She became smaller and smaller until she was no bigger than a violet. With a tinkling laugh she sprang toward the wooden eye, which gleamed on the sunny water like a golden boat. She flicked from her fingers the last few drops, and they fell sparkling upon the girl.

"No longer Fay Tiggles shall you be," she cried. "But the

name shall be yours which sixteen years has been waiting for you. Thus I baptize you, Angelica Jane!"

So saying, she hoisted her scarf and the breeze filled it and away she sailed down the little stream which trickles over the pebbles from the Spring of the World's End and gets bigger and bigger and runs to goodness knows where.

The girl watched her disappear; and then you may be sure she did not linger. Quickly wishing herself home, she stubbed her toe upon the second step; and as quick as a wink home she was. And so Fay Tiggles became Angelica Jane.



The Butter Woman

## *The Story of Happy Eyes and the Sixth Princess* **THE LOST YESTERDAY**



ONCE upon a time there was a girl named Happy Eyes. That was not really the name they gave her at the font, but her father no sooner caught sight of her than that's what he called her and so she remained ever afterward.

Her eyes were that kind of blue which seems to be smiling at its own blueness, and you have to look through the shiny smile to get at them—like a morning glory under dew. They made every one so happy to look into them that he smiled back again. Even the princess did. For you must know that the prince no sooner saw her than he wanted to eat her up; and as no good would come of that, he married her on the spot and took her off

to the palace to live and change her clothes three times a day. Happy Eyes, who had never had but two frocks in her life—an every day one and a Friday one! She looked so much sweeter than the princess in every one of them that no wonder the poor thing was vexed. It isn't a bit nice to have your brother bring back to the palace a girl so much prettier than you are, to live there in your plain sight. But the princess couldn't help loving her just the same, and it was only once in a while when Happy Eyes looked prettier than ever, that she even wanted to help it. But on a Tuesday was one of the times.

They were in the garden after breakfast eating raspberries, and the princess said to her loftily. "You ought to be glad that you can eat these lovely berries here in the queen's garden."

"Yes," said Happy Eyes, "I am. But raspberries are raspberries. I was glad to eat them at home too."

"What!" cried the princess. "As if anybody grew berries like my father the king! How can you compare your home to the palace?"

Happy Eyes laughed gently. "A palace is only a home too, when you live there. How could it be anything more?"

The princess ate several berries in annoyance, which is in itself a foolish thing. A berry is such a sweet little bit of juicy nothing, that if you don't give your whole mind to it, you might just as well not eat it at all. "How can you say

so?" she said at last in a snippy voice. "Think of that brown thing you had on when you came here, and now this lovely pink frock."

Happy Eyes looked down at her shimmering lap. "All you can be is happy," she said. "And I was as happy in the brown one as I am in this. And as far as frocks go, I was happier on Fridays than I could ever be here any day."

"Why Fridays?"

"Because I changed then to my best and the other went into the tub," exclaimed Happy Eyes. "There is no beautiful Friday frock here. But frocks are only frocks, and you can't be happier than you will hold."

The princess stamped her foot. "Common folk can't," she cried. "But I will be, for I'm a princess born, and my palace is more than a home, and these berries more than berries."

Happy Eyes laughed again. It was the unprovokingest laugh in the world, but it made her sister-in-law furious. "How could they be?" she said. "Even if you had been somebody else like me, and the last one of you could always be thinking of the first one of you, all you can be is happy, no matter which one you are."

"We'll see," said the princess, drawing herself up in her dignity. And off she marched. This was her plan: To be somebody else and prove that Happy Eyes was wrong. For you must know that at her christening her godmother gave her any wish she wanted in a little green box shaped like a

heart. All she had to do was to make a wish and open it. But she had never had a wish in her life that couldn't be satisfied easier than by getting up on a chair to take the little green box down from the top shelf in the closet; and there it had lain gathering dust all these years. So now she went to her room and, sending her three maids away, she locked the door and got up on a chair and took down the box.

She stood with her finger-tip on the spring. "Now I must wish," she said. "And I must be careful, for I have only one. I wish to be somebody else all tomorrow, and to know that I am I all the time." She pushed the spring, and the heart-shaped lid flew open with such a clap that the box jumped out of her hand and broke like a puff-ball all to pieces on the floor. Look as she would among all the splinters, the princess could find nothing but the outsides. If there was anything worth having inside the wish-box, she couldn't find it.

Well, the next morning the princess woke up somebody else, in somebody else's bed, which wasn't a bed at all, only some straw in a cow-shed. She thought she was still dreaming and tried to rub the dream out of her eyes. But still there was the straw and there the cow-shed, and the cow chewing in the corner. Then she remembered her wish and hopped up joyfully to put on her clothes. But there were no clothes to put on, she had slept in them the night before. And she had no shoes and no looking-glass for her hair.

"Gracious!" said the princess. "I'm glad I'm a princess and today can't be any longer than today!" But while she was a princess she was also somebody else, and as if she knew all about it and had done it every morning of her life, she undid the door. At the sound the cow came up to her and turned her head to her thoughtfully as she ambled out of the shed, the princess following. Out they went into the sparkling morning and entered a path that led down to the meadow.

"That cow seems to suspect me," said the princess to herself. "She probably sees for all my poor appearance that I am a princess."

When they got to the meadow, the cow began to graze and the princess sat down quite naturally by the brook. She dipped her face in the cool water and smoothed her hair as best she could by dint of using some twigs as a comb. Then she put her hand to her pocket just as if she had known all about it, and drew out a piece of black bread for her breakfast. The bread was as hard as hard could be, but she broke off a piece hungrily and found that by chewing it a great deal she could swallow it quite well. She managed only a few swallows when she looked up and found growing right beside her a raspberry bush. She leaped up with delight and picked a juicy berry and popped it into her mouth. Never in her life had she tasted anything so delicious as that soft berry with the hard bread.

"Why, it is better than my father's, the king's," she said in surprise. Then she remembered suddenly what she had said to her sister-in-law. Then it came over her all at once that even if it was only for a day, she didn't know where she was, or where her father was, and that if anything should happen to her no one would ever know, and that Happy Eyes was eating a lovely breakfast with all the cream and sugar she wanted and no tangles in her hair and her new slippers on, and that she, the princess, was all alone in the wide world.

And though the morning was sparkling and the breeze sweet with woodsiness and the brook gurgling at her feet and she hadn't been anywhere or seen anything, she flounced down upon the ground and cried. She cried all day long until her eyes were lumpy, without moving except to rest her bones by turning over. She cried until the sun walked right across the sky and down on the other side. Her eyes grew lumpier and lumpier because, though she kept on crying, she hadn't any tears left to wet them with. When the shadows grew longer and made queer flickers on the ground, she dared not look up even if she had had any eyes left to see with. When an arm of the raspberry bush tapped her on the cheek, she screamed with fright and felt her heart beating in her ears.

There on the arm of the raspberry bush and on the stem of the raspberry that she had eaten, with his legs wound around the little spike that you leave on the stem when you pick a

very ripe berry, and his pointed chin resting on the very top of it, sat a little green man. He was so small that his eyes were like pin-points, but she could see him wink at her quite plainly. He was singing a song, and this is what he sang:

Be you cow-girl or be you queen,  
You can't be more than you have been.  
And you can't subtract and you can't divide  
And you can't do anything else beside.  
You may twist it and turn it twenty ways,  
But you are the sum of your yesterdays.

Giving another solemn wink, he sprang suddenly to the top of the spike and kicking out his legs like a frog he shot into the air. It was all sudden enough to stop the hiccups. But the poor princess hadn't been hiccupping, and it only stopped her for a moment. She covered her face with her hands and fell to crying again. She cried it a half hour darker than it was. Until the little brook began to sing its goodnight song. And



when the princess stopped at last in sheer worn-outness, she heard it singing in little silver whispers. And this is the tune it whispered:

Be you cow-girl or be you queen,  
You can't be more than happy.  
You've just two eyes for all that's seen,  
And just two hands to have between,  
And just one heart that when all's told  
Can't be fuller than it will hold.  
Hold and told—and seen and queen—  
Now I must take my nappie.

The brook murmured away sleepily, and the night shadows began to rise. Not the day shadows that fall on the ground from the trees and things, but the night ones that come up out of the ground and though they smell sweet have a great lonesomeness when anyone is away from home at supper time.

The princess thought she should die of wanting. She wanted to go back. She wanted tomorrow to come, she wanted everything she was used to. But principally she wanted to get away, and the night shadows were so thick she didn't dare to stir. She sat with her head on her knees, making herself as small as she could, if anything should happen to pounce at her. She heard a slow swishing and

crashing though the bushes which made her heart leap to her throat. It seemed to be making for the place where she sat. She buried her face to her ears between her knees in terror. Then it ceased suddenly. She peeped up to find the kindly thoughtful eyes of the cow upon her. She sprang to her feet. "O dear cow!" she cried, putting her arms around its neck. "I never was so glad to see anyone in my life. "O dear cow, let us go home!"

The cow without a word turned slowly, and they came out of the bushes into the meadow and turned into the meadow-path down which they had come that morning. It wasn't dark at all, only the pleasantest of twilights and the sun still rosy in the west. When they got to the cowshed, she was never so glad to see anything in all her life. She shook down some more straw and led the cow into her stall and was happy to be at home again. Even the lumps in her eyes were beginning to go down. When she smiled with happiness, the smiles went up of course and hit the lumps and knocked them down, as you may see for yourself any time you have a mind to.

"O dear cow," she said smiling. "It is so nice to be home—for home is where one feels safe."

But the cow looked at her with reproachful eyes.

"Why," said the princess, "I haven't milked you yet!" Quite as naturally as if she had been all her life doing it, she got down the pail from the hook and while the cow gently

swished her tail at one end and chewed as quietly at the other she milked a pailful. That shows you how strong the wish was, for nobody can do it right off unless they've learned how. Then she drank her fill of the good warm milk and put up the bar at the door, while the stars were shining brightly. The clean straw felt delicious as she sank back into it, after lying all day humped up on the hard ground.

"Good night, dear cow," she said, "and thank you for your milk."

The cow turned to look at her quietly. Her breath was sweet with meadow grass and she looked contented as she worked her jaws peacefully over her cud. The princess gazed into her eyes until she was quite fascinated. They seemed so restful and large, and the gentle swish of her tail seemed to her sleepy ears to make a little tune, and to her sleepy mind the words sounded like this:

Be you cow-girl, queen, or cow,  
Or simple, wise, or greedy,  
Your heart's your home, and anyhow  
Four walls are all that's needful."

The next thing she remembered was waking up in her own bed and her three maids were bringing out her things. She dressed as quickly as she could and ran down stairs to Happy Eyes. She told her everything from beginning to end, all about the wish-box, the cow, the brook, and the

green man. "And now I know," she ended, "that you and all of them were right and how foolish I was."

Happy Eyes smiled. "But that was only because your godmother looked out for you. Because, you know, you never really were the cow-girl at all, for you knew you were the princess all the time. If you had been really the cow-girl, your godmother needn't have interfered and you wouldn't have lost the whole day crying, remembering you were you."

"You mean," asked the princess in astonishment, "the cow-girl was happy or would have been if I hadn't spoiled her?"

"Of course. And now, don't you see, you've ruined one of her yesterdays and you've lost one of yours. For you were neither one thing nor the other."

"Oh!" said the princess tearfully, remembering the little green man. "But he said you couldn't subtract or divide or do anything to make them different."

Happy Eyes was puzzled. "Well, I guess you can't," said she at last. "Ordinarily. And I guess it was all on account of your godmother's wish-box. She won't let any harm come to the cow-girl's sum on your account. But on your own, we must see your godmother and find out how to get back your yesterday."

"But it was mine, too," said the princess eagerly. "I cried all the time."

"Would you have cried if you had been just yourself? If you had been here?"

"No," admitted the princess.

"So you see it wasn't yours. And it wasn't hers either, because she wouldn't. It was because you were and you weren't. And so we must find your godmother and see how to get it back. It may be anywhere, and you wouldn't want one of your yesterdays lying around for anybody to pick up, would you? Besides, your sum will never come right until you find it. So we must start right away to your godmother's."

"I don't know where she is—nobody does. She just drives up in a coach when people are christened."

"Pooh!" said Happy Eyes. "If she has a coach she has a stable, and if she has a stable she has a house, and if she has a house she must sleep in it. Part of the time at any rate. We shall find it."

"How?" asked the princess, quite impressed.

"I don't know," said Happy Eyes. "But we shall find it. When your eyes are happy," she added shyly, "everybody's glad to tell you things. So get your bonnet."

Sure enough, the first person they met after they got beyond the palace fence told them. It was a butter-woman with a parrot on her shoulder. "My dears," she said as she curtsied to their greeting. "I'm sure I don't know anything but butter. But my parrot knows everything, if you ask it in French."

So the princess, feeling very important, asked in French the way to her godmother's. She was very glad she didn't have to use the pluperfect tense, which she hadn't got to yet. The parrot clucked pleasantly and told her the way, while Happy Eyes stroked its green head.

"Thank you," said the princess to the butter-woman, and they started on. But Happy Eyes said to the princess, "What is the French for thank you?" Oh, *merci*," she said as she stroked the parrot on his green top-knot.

The parrot clucked and put its beak fondly into the butter-woman's ear. "Yes, yes," the butter-woman said, just as if somebody had reminded her of something. "Oh, my dears, I will be going your way."

So they thanked the old woman for her pleasant company, and the four went lovingly up the hill together. They came to a little door in the rock, and the butter-woman fumbled for her keys. "This is a short cut over the hill," she said.

When she opened the door, it was like a door in a wall, and instead of having a roof like a cave, it was as bright as it was outside, if not brighter, and certainly rosier. Before them there were rows and rows of trees stretching neatly away as far as the eye could see, like a peach orchard only the trees were like thin young poplars. They were green and full of leaves and instead of fruit trees, they saw that they were clothes trees. Hanging from each straight little bough, just as if they were on clothes hangers, were little frocks and

suits of clothes. They were all swinging in the wind brightly, as pretty a sight as any one could wish to see.

"What funny trees!" said Happy Eyes and the princess in a breath.

"It is the orchard of yesterdays," said the butter-woman. "And each tree is a fortnight. To get to one's fairy godmother, one must always go through the orchard of yesterdays. Here is your row," she said to the princess.

Sure enough it was. And there on the nearest tree, one yesterday was missing. The clothes hanger was all waiting for it, but no yesterday was on it.

The princess wrung her hands. "My row will never be finished now. Oh, what shall I do!" She turned helplessly to the butter-woman, but in their excitement at discovering the princess's row, the old woman must have slipped away among the trees. She was nowhere to be seen. The princess redoubled her tears. "Oh, Oh, Oh," she cried. "What shall we do now? How shall we get back? And my row will never be finished!"

Happy Eyes took her hand comfortingly. "There is no use in *crying* over a yesterday. That is the way you lost it anyway. Crying over the day before. As for getting out, it is very simple. We shall just follow down your row until we come to your christening day, and there we shall find your godmother."

So the princess dried her tears, and hand in hand together

they went down the long row of yesterdays. All the birthday and the holiday trees were pink. The frocks on the clothes hangers got smaller and smaller until all at once they began to lengthen out again, and they grew longer and longer until at last they swayed and curved like pennants in the breeze. So they came to the christening tree. There sure enough, under the tree stood the princess' godmother leaning on her stick. She had a sharp face and twinkling eyes and her hair in puffs, and she had on a green bonnet and on her long hands were black lace mitts.

"Mercy on us!" she said as if she were greatly surprised. "Who are these, pray?"

"Ask her right out," whispered Happy Eyes, for she saw the princess was hesitating. "She's your godmother, or I would."

"If you please," faltered the princess, "I am your god-child. And we've come for a yesterday."

"Hoity-toity!" said the godmother. "Which one of your yesterdays?"

"The very last one. I lost it when I wished with your wish-box."

"What is that you say?" asked the godmother sharply. "How?"

"Because," said the princess timidly, "I wished to be somebody else and me at the same time."

"That is the worst of wishes," said the godmother.

"One never uses them right. I shall give *your* children rattles."

Happy Eyes laughed. "They at least have *something* in them," she said, "and the wish-box was empty."

"Humph!" said the godmother. "The wish was there until she wished it. That it came to nothing is not my look-out."

"But," said the princess, "it came to a great deal. And I'd rather lose my yesterday than have it like the others, for now all my tomorrows will be different. It's only what the green man said."

"Tush!" said the godmother, mightily pleased. "Who is the green man?"

"It's my belief," put in Happy Eyes, "that the green man was you."

"I?" echoed the godmother. "Perhaps you'll say I was the cow too."

"Who told you about the cow?" said Happy Eyes quickly. "Yes, I think you were the cow too."

"Hoity-toity!" chuckled the godmother. "You should not tax age with its follies. But you are a very shrewd girl."

Happy Eyes was staring hard at the green bonnet, and she thought the godmother's sharp white nose under it looked very like a beak. "*Merci!*" she said slyly.

Whereat the godmother chuckled in a perfect cackle of chuckles, and they sounded very like clucks. "Well," she said at last when she had got her breath, "what is it you





want? Not even a godmother can bring back a lost yesterday. But I'm glad to see you remembered the rhymes, although I can do a great deal better than that on any day but Wednesday. And when people are not crying their ears away! And though you were neither one thing nor the other, after all you were something. Well, I'll see what I can do. Meanwhile I'll catch my death of cold. So good-night, my dears. Go out the way you came. For if you walk any further down this row you'll walk yourself into just nothing at all."

"Goodbye, dear godmother," said the princess. "And thank you so much for the green man and the brook and the cow."

"Tush, my dears," said the godmother. "Let me see your backs."

Curtsying to her, they turned, and hand in hand walked up the long row of yesterdays, past the baby robes that grew shorter and shorter until they became little frocks and then, as one by one they went past the green trees and the pink, grew into longer frocks and longer until they came to the very last tree of all.

"Oh, look!" cried Happy Eyes. "See what is hanging there."

There on the last hanger, which was quite empty when they came in, was a torn brown gown tied with long gold streamers.

The princess stood quite still. "It is my yesterday," at last she said softly. "And it is the very best of them all."

"And now you know," said Happy Eyes, "what my Friday frock was like to me."

Suddenly, they never knew how, they found themselves walking in at the palace gate, and there stood the prince waiting for them.

"Wherever have you been?" he cried. "It's supper time." Then he looked from one to the other with amazement. "Which of you is Happy Eyes?" he said.

It was quite true. They looked both alike, and as soft and sweet as anybody on earth could be. That is how it always happens with people when they go hunting yesterdays together.











